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NICOLE EINBINDER GABRIELA BHASKAR

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THE Nation.



How Much Is Too Much?

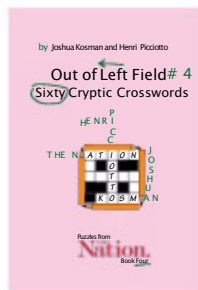
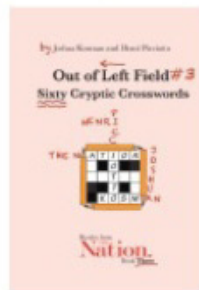
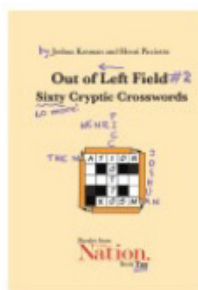
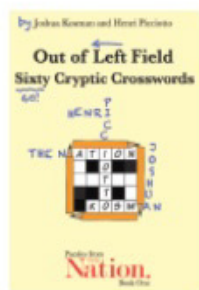
A surging egalitarian current is shifting
the Democratic Party's policy mainstream

SAM PIZZIGATI

Puzzles from THE Nation.

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and Henri Picciotto

240 cryptic crosswords
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Gents,

I've almost finished Book 3. "Pace yourself." I AM. Still. They're so great, I can't stop. Therefore kindly have Book 4 available by end of business one week from today.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yrs., etc.,

Ellis Weiner

Dear Sir,

At your service.

Kosman and Picciotto

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(2011-13)—20 per e-book
in the Puzzazz.com app.



The Truth About Lies

In his Oct. 28/Nov. 4 column, "Cruel and Unusual," Eric Alterman falters when condemning the August 6 *New York Times* headline "Trump Urges Unity vs. Racism." Echoing widespread denunciations from progressives, Alterman suggests that "the paper was deceiving its readers on Trump's behalf"—even though the headline was "literally true" as a description of Trump's speech after the El Paso massacre. Alterman bizarrely adds that the *Times*, "like nearly all news organizations," has been "hesitant about calling Trump a liar." In the summer of 2017, however, the *Times* published a massive article titled "Trump's Lies"; the words "lies" and "lying" appear regularly in its coverage of him; and *The Washington Post's* lie tally has topped 13,000.

According to a tweet from Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the August 6 *Times* headline illustrated "how white supremacy is aided by—and often relies upon—the cowardice of mainstream institutions." Can't we elaborate on the horrors of this presidency without brandishing Trumpish hyperbole against our allies? A headline should accurately summarize an article and the events it discusses. As I have written elsewhere, our country's political prospects could easily worsen if premier journalistic venues use headlines to editorialize.

PETER MINOWITZ
Department of Political Science
Santa Clara University
SANTA CLARA, CALIF.

Eric Alterman Replies

Professor Minowitz is mistaken. In the single example he uses to attempt to undermine my argument, he quotes an article from 2017 that appears beneath the word "opinion." Trump is called a liar in opinion columns everywhere. But when it comes

to the news pages, almost never. *The New York Times* has done it, according to my count, only once, perhaps twice, and certainly not regularly. *Times* executive editor Dean Baquet explains why: "If you get loose with the word lie, you're going to look pretty scurrilous. Right? It's going to be in every story." The tally by the *Washington Post* fact-checkers that Minowitz cites does not refer to "lies" but to "false or misleading claims." The *Post*, too, has used the word "lie" only once. That paper's executive editor, Martin Baron, explains his hesitancy as follows: "I think you have to actually have documentation, proof, that whoever you're saying lied actually knew that what he or she was saying was in fact false."

Ocasio-Cortez is also correct, but that's another story. ERIC ALTERMAN

Fixing a Supreme Injustice

Re Elie Mystal's "The Extreme Court" [Oct. 28/Nov. 4]: Here's my two pennies' worth. There is only one answer to the right-wing takeover of the Supreme Court: Register to vote. Vote in local, county, state, school, congressional, senatorial, and presidential elections. And push for a nationwide mail-in ballot.

EDGAR GEHLERT
HYDE PARK, N.Y.

Bookish Praise

I thoroughly enjoyed Peter E. Gordon's review of Martin Hägglund's new book, *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom* ["Either This World or the Next," October 7]. Gordon writes beautifully, with subtlety and precision. I love *The Nation's* book review section. Please keep up your high standards of writing and thinking!

DAVID SCHONFELD
WEST HARTFORD, CONN.

letters@thenation.com

Red Ink. The New Black?

It may seem anomalous to invoke Barry Goldwater in the context of a discussion on progressive politics. But progressives could do worse than embrace the sentiment of his famous dictum that “extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice, and...moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.” To borrow from the late senator,

progressives should be mindful that deficit spending in the pursuit of a prosperous economy that works for all is no vice, and fiscal moderation in the pursuit of social justice is clearly no virtue.

Unfortunately, over the last few decades, the only extremism Democrats have embraced is a perverse adherence to fiscal moderation, specifically a self-defeating fetishization of public debts and budget deficits. While the GOP has long since abandoned any inhibitions about government spending—especially under Donald Trump—prominent Democrats like Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer, and John Yarmuth (the chair of the House Budget Committee) continue to express concerns about increasing the federal deficit and federal debt while watering down their progressive colleagues’ aspirations with vacuous pay-go restrictions dictating that programs be paid for out of current revenue. Instead of invoking Franklin Roosevelt or Lyndon Johnson, these DC dinosaurs are operating from the 1993 playbook of Bill Clinton, Robert Rubin, and other Wall Street Democrats, who reined in the party’s progressive flank on the grounds that fiscally irresponsible government spending would cause bond yields to shoot up, driving borrowing costs higher, tightening financial conditions, and throwing general panic into the broader financial markets. (The Clinton administration’s habitual genuflections to fiscal probity were so pronounced that political adviser James Carville once said, “I used to think that if there was reincarnation, I wanted to come back as the president or the pope or as a .400 baseball hitter. But now I would like to come back as the bond market. You can intimidate everybody.”)

It’s more difficult to make that case today, when US Treasury yields are at multidecade lows and stock markets are at historic highs in spite of the usual sensationalizing about debts and deficits.

It’s also flawed economics. Far from crowding out private sector investment, government spending crowds in private spending by creating additional demand. Increases in the budget deficit actually tend to decrease rather than raise interest rates. This is because government deficit spending leads to a net injection of reserves into the banking system. (And big deficits imply big injections of reserves.) When the banking system is flush with reserves, the price of those reserves—the federal funds rate in the United States—is driven to zero in the absence of countervailing measures (such as bond sales).



Contrary to the claims of the economic Chicken Littles, the government policy response in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis never caused Weimar-style hyperinflation, as the scaremongers suggested. Nor did the United States experience national bankruptcy (although we came close when

Republicans stupidly threatened to push us into a voluntary default by refusing to raise the national debt ceiling).

But one unfortunate by-product of the crisis is that it engendered a collective psychosis regarding deficit spending, especially within the Democratic Party. Ironically, if they chose to look around a bit, Democrats might find some surprising allies to help them discard some of the old myths on government spending to which some still tenaciously cling. Even on Wall Street, of all places, the bond vigilantes, if they ever existed, are gradually being superseded by market strategists, chief economists (from Goldman Sachs, no less), and hedge fund managers, who embrace a different kind of framework, the so-called sectoral balances approach. Much like accountants scrutinizing an entire balance sheet, as opposed to monitoring just the profit and loss ledger, these market practitioners

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Cover illustration by Victor Juhasz



BY THE NUMBERS

37K

Daily number of people forced to flee their homes because of persecution and violence

70.8M

Number of forcibly displaced people worldwide, according to the United Nations

26M

Number of refugees worldwide, according to the UN

0.4%

Percentage of refugees re-settled by the UN

36%

Percentage registered by the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees who come from Syria or Afghanistan

207K

Number of refugees settled in the United States in 1980

0

Number settled in the US in October—the first time the country hasn't taken in a single refugee since monthly records were started nearly 30 years ago

—Mary Akdemir

recognize that the national economy operates via a constant churning of debits and credits among the three main sectors: the government, international trade, and the private sector (households and businesses). In this big spreadsheet that represents our national economy, government minuses become private sector pluses and vice versa. Policy should likewise be constructed with this operational reality in mind, as opposed to monomaniacally focusing on just one piece—budget deficits—of the jigsaw puzzle.

Why does this matter? If businesses won't invest in real productive capacity (the kind that creates jobs instead of just goosing a company's share price) or consumers can't spend much more (because of private debt and stagnating wages) or the US cannot tap global demand to increase exports, then that leaves only the government to step in to spend and invest. Absent robust deficit spending, a drop in private income flows while private debt loads remain high is an invitation to debt defaults and widespread bankruptcies—exactly what we experienced during the Great Depression.

Invoking the Depression might seem peculiar at a time when the official unemployment rate is at a 50-year low. But that number doesn't give the full story. A recent Gallup survey on job quality reports that fewer than half of American workers said they feel they are in good jobs. Many are turning to loan sharks to make ends meet. Additionally, the US economy still faces substantial long-term challenges—decaying public infrastructure, threats posed by climate change, the most expensive health care system in the developed world, and rampant wealth inequality. And here progressive Democrats have the answers: much-needed infrastructure investment, a Green New Deal, Medicare for All, and policies to reduce inequality. Offering a GOP-lite agenda won't cut it.

In an environment increasingly characterized by slowing global economic growth, businesses are understandably hesitant to invest in a way that creates high-quality, high-paying jobs for the bulk of the domestic workforce. The much-vaunted Trump corporate “tax reform” may have been sold to the American public on that basis, but corporations have largely used their tax cut bonanza to engage in share buybacks, which fatten executive compensation but have done nothing for the rest of us. At the same time, private households still face constraints on their consumption because of stagnant wages, rising health care costs, declining job security, poorer employment benefits, and rising debt levels.

Instead of solving these problems, the reliance on extraordinary monetary policy from the Federal Reserve via programs such as quantitative easing has exacerbated them. In contrast to properly targeted fiscal spending, the Federal Reserve's misguided monetary policies have fueled additional financial speculation and asset inflation in stock markets and real estate, which has made housing even less affordable for the average American.

Which points to another big problem. An economy

grows less efficiently when most of its gains are funneled to the wealthiest people (with the highest saving propensities, since they already have more than they will ever need). As the economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman have documented, tax data in the United States illustrates that as of 2012 the top 0.1 percent held 22 percent of the country's total wealth—the same amount as the bottom 90 percent. We've gone back to levels of economic distribution that existed more than 100 years ago, when there were hardly any cars, unions were politically marginal, and social welfare provision was minuscule. Rising economic inequality undermines the capacity for individuals to invest in education, which is one of the most reliable sources of economic development. (The resulting lack of skill development has become one of the excuses used by US businesses for continuing to move their operations offshore, thereby depriving Americans of high-quality, well-paying jobs.)

In recent years the federal government has spent many trillions of dollars waging endless wars, with no lasting benefit accruing to the US economy (to say nothing of the lives lost or the other social costs and global environmental degradation incurred). Yet at no time did the deficit hawks in Congress stop to consider the question of “How do we pay for it?” Affordability is invoked only in the context of vital social welfare programs that constitute our ultimate safety net as a society.

Our irrational obsession with the deficit also stands in the way of much-needed public investments in our economic future and in taking the steps needed to enhance our public quality of life. Democrats therefore need to stop internalizing the values of our rentier class and start focusing on the needs

of the rest of us. The changing politics on deficits is a glorious opportunity to do just that. Failing to seize that opportunity or simply arguing for a return to the status quo ante (as Hillary Clinton did, which gave us Trump) could deliver us something far worse than this president the next time around. Steve Bannon may have been banished from the White House, but imagine what a more competent version of Trump could do. Imagine how much damage a president who actually knew something about the mechanics of governing could inflict and how far a coherent far-right agenda could go.

Instead, progressive Democrats should embrace the “extremist” spirit of Goldwater and eschew fiscal timidity (which, in any case, is based on faulty economics). After all, Republicans do it when it suits their legislative agenda. Likewise, Democrats should go big with deficits—as long as they are used for the transformative programs that progressives have long talked about and now have the chance to deliver.

MARSHALL AUERBACK

Marshall Auerback is a financial market practitioner and an economics commentator for the Independent Media Institute. He is also a research associate of the Levy Institute at Bard College.

EDITORIAL

Asking for a Friend



Too Farage Gone

Dear Liza,

I have a childhood friend whom I see about once a year. Her husband has joined racist Nigel Farage's Brexit Party and is running for Parliament in the UK. When I heard the news, I was aghast. A few weeks later, my friend wrote to ask if I was dropping her and to find out why I hadn't written. In her note she let me know that she is "fine" with her husband's move into politics. Now I am at a loss. Does etiquette dictate that we send reassuring notes to old friends whose husbands join far-right political groups?

—Awkwardly Antifascist

Dear Awkwardly Antifascist,

Normally, this column advises protecting our personal relationships despite political differences. If her husband were just some ineffectual loser posting Farage memes on his Instagram to annoy her liberal friends, I'd perhaps advise letting it go. Why sacrifice our oldest ties to be pointlessly self-righteous? Besides, friend breakups may serve a developmental purpose in our youth, helping us figure out who we are and how much nonsense we can and cannot endure from others, but after a certain age, we'd all prefer to retire from that kind of drama.

But this is not a normal situation, as you know, Antifascist. Around the world, groups like the Brexit Party, led by such far-right demagogues as Farage, Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, Viktor Orbán, and Narendra Modi, are fomenting hate against immigrants and other minorities. Their brutal, racist policies have shored up a right-wing agenda that is anti-feminist, anti-worker, climate-change denying, and deeply friendly to the capitalist class. Given the global rise of such movements, we all have to help raise the cost of being a politically active fascist. People involved in such politics should not dine without rude interruption in nice restaurants or exclusive clubs, nor should they (or their partners) be accepted socially.

As for your friend's letter, what an outrageously manipulative gambit on her part! She has some nerve. Rather than guilt-tripping her friends for avoiding her and expressing approval for her resident fascist, she should be apologizing for her husband's awful role in politics. (If she acknowledged any shame or conflict in her letter or asked for your counsel on this unfortunate development in her marriage, my advice might

be different.) Write to her and tell her that despite your long friendship, you can't be in touch during this stage of her husband's political career. If that seems like too much emotional work, don't worry: Not writing back might send this message almost as clearly. Maybe if enough of her friends drop her over this, she'll get divorced—or pressure her husband to abandon this cruel project.

Dear Liza,

I recently found myself in the strange position of being fired from my job, even though I had quit several days before. Why would my employer do this, and do I have any recourse? —Mystified in Manhattan

Dear Mystified,

The answer to any question about why an employer does anything, labor lawyer Tim Sears tells me, is "because they can." Most workers serve at the pleasure of the employer and can be fired for any reason—or for no reason at all. It's part of "how capitalism is inherently unfair," he says.

Your former employer may want to "show who's boss," Sears adds. If you've been critical of management or otherwise making trouble, the organization might want to make an example of you for other employees, making sure that you leave in as humiliating a way as possible instead of coasting, unpunished, to some other opportunity. The retroactive firing may be an effort to terrorize others and discredit any criticisms you made. The managers would like to make it look as if they intended to fire you all along and are perhaps hoping that your former colleagues will

(continued on page 8)

Questions?
Ask Liza at
TheNation
.com/article/
asking-for-a-
friend



SIGNAL: NOISE

Courting Disaster

Even as President Donald Trump faces almost certain impeachment, he continues to send unqualified, far-right judicial nominees to the Senate, and majority leader Mitch McConnell continues to fast-track their confirmation hearings.

Take Steven Menashi, a White House legal aide (and former counsel to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos) who is now up for a lifetime seat on the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Despite his extremist views on race, gender equality, and gay rights, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted on November 7 to move forward with a confirmation vote. Menashi will likely soon be deciding crucial cases in New York—some concerning Trump.

So far, 158 federal judges have been confirmed during this presidency. On November 6, the White House crowed that this represents “a historic transformation.” The briefing’s kicker: “Judges appointed by President Trump are expected to give the Nation more than 2,600 years of combined judicial service. The average age of circuit judges appointed by President Trump is under 50—a full 10 years younger than the average age of President Obama’s circuit nominees.”

The GOP-controlled Senate is tying itself into knots to defend Trump because the party is playing for keeps: aiming to transform the courts and, by extension, American society and its values for generations.

Read the semiweekly column “Signal:Noise” at thenation.com/content/signal-noise.

—Sasha Abramsky



Yang Isn't Ready

He can identify problems but not solutions.

The most striking moment so far in Andrew Yang’s unlikely yet resilient presidential bid came in the fourth Democratic debate, when someone else was asked about Yang’s signature issue. Addressing Elizabeth Warren, moderator Erin Burnett said, “You wrote that blaming job loss on automation is ‘a good story, except it’s not really true.’ So should workers here in Ohio not be worried about losing their jobs to automation?” The candidate’s response was a slurry of “by golly,” “gee,” and “I have a plan to fix that” sloganeering that focused on legitimate concerns about trade policy as it has affected industrial workers but never got around to answering the question. Warren wasn’t wrong to criticize the “giant multinational corporations who’ve been calling the shots on trade.” It’s just that she seemed to be giving a 1993 answer to a question about 2023.

That gave Yang a narrow opening to plead with his fellow Democrats to start thinking about the future. “Senator Warren,” he said, “I’ve been talking to Americans around the country about automation. And they’re smart. They see what’s happening around them. Their Main Street stores are closing. They see a self-serve kiosk in every McDonald’s, every grocery store, every CVS. Driving a truck is the most common job in 29 states, including this one—3.5 million truck drivers in this country. And my friends in California are piloting self-driving trucks. What is that going to mean for the 3.5 million truckers or the 7 million Americans who work in truck stops, motels, and diners that rely upon the truckers getting out and having a meal? Saying this is a rules problem is ignoring the reality that Americans see around us every single day.”

“So I understand that what we’re all looking for is how we strengthen America’s middle class,” replied Warren, who then explained her “plan to extend the solvency of Social Security.” She never got to the automation question, except to say, “I want to understand the data on this.” That should have put the spotlight back on Yang, a 44-year-old entrepreneur who can point to so many studies on how automation already has displaced workers and will continue to do so that his campaign slogan is “MATH.” Instead, following the common practice of 2020 Democratic debate hosts, Burnett shut the conversation down just as it got interesting.

When I asked Yang a few weeks later about

the exchange with Warren, he said, “That was surprising to me, given that she is one of the better, I believe, thinkers in the Democratic Party on many of these types of issues.” The moment when the themes of his campaign finally hit the national stage was “very edifying and a little bit disappointing, frankly,” he admitted. A first-time candidate running what’s been described as a pirate ship campaign, Yang worries that “our political process is not really well designed for us to get into the weeds on what the data look like in automation and many other subject areas.”

As someone who has written a great deal about the future of work, and about how automation influences politics, I share his frustration. Like Yang, I believe Donald Trump’s reactionary politics fills a void created by the Democrats’ failure to wrestle with next-economy issues. Yet I don’t believe Yang is wrestling with those issues as ably as tech-savvy members of Congress, like Representative Ro Khanna, or progressive leaders in the UK and Germany.

What worries me is that Yang’s gimmicky campaign—in the third Democratic debate, he announced a scheme to select 10 families at random and give each of them \$1,000 a month over the course of a year to illustrate his flagship universal basic income (UBI) proposal—is better at identifying problems than solving them. When I put this concern to him, he pushed back, arguing that his approach is showing results. He’s been on the cover of *Newsweek*. Polls put him in the middle of a crowded pack (and closer to the top among young voters), even if he’s far behind the candidate he said he favored in 2016, Bernie Sanders. Yang raised \$10 million in the last quarter, enough to staff up and launch a slick \$1 million ad buy in Iowa, with commercials produced by the same consultants who aided Sanders in 2016. “Andrew Yang’s campaign,” declares *The Week*, “has gone mainstream.”

But is Yang ready for prime time? He has staked his campaign on an old idea—providing every adult American with that \$1,000-per-month “Freedom Dividend”—that would cost a lot (\$2.8 trillion each year, according to the Tax Foundation) and would be offset by a potentially regressive value-added tax on consumption, a commendable financial transactions tax, and the hope that giving away money would stimulate economic growth. Great progressive thinkers like the late Erik Olin Wright have long argued for UBI as a response to automation-related displacement, but so, too, have government-hating libertarians. Yang identifies himself as a progressive and said he favors “human-centered capitalism.” But his plan sounds

Great progressive thinkers have argued for UBI—but so have libertarians.

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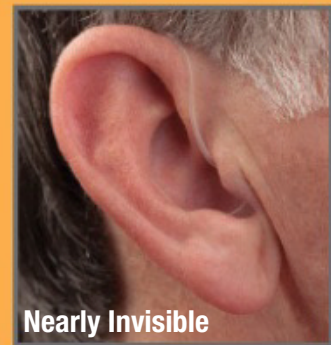
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Yang notes that his Freedom Dividend “fits seamlessly into capitalism.” I’m not sure that’s a worthy goal.

a little libertarian when his campaign website explains his UBI proposal this way: “Current welfare and social program beneficiaries would be given a choice between their current benefits or \$1,000 cash unconditionally—most would prefer cash with no restriction.” I asked Yang about the progressive-versus-libertarian debate. “We can do a best-of-both-worlds approach,” he replied. “I’m certainly not one of these ultraconservative types who wants to dismantle every social program on the books. I think that we need to lay a foundation in the form of those dividends and then see what the additional problems are and try to solve those as well.”

That’s too vague and unsettling for those of us who

believe that if the UBI is tried in a big way, it must be associated with a muscular social welfare state. Also worrisome is the Yang campaign’s argument that the Freedom Dividend “fits seamlessly into capitalism” and can “support and preserve a robust consumer economy.” I’m not sure that’s a worthy goal, but I am sure that this response to automation is too casual and ill-defined.

Yang has earned his moment. I agree with author Martin Ford when he says, “Andrew Yang, and his warnings about the impact of AI and automation, should be taken seriously.” But Yang still hasn’t quite reached the solutions stage of the debate. JOHN NICHOLS

(continued from page 5)

conclude, therefore, that the problem was you rather than the company.

Another possibility is just plain stinginess: You might be less entitled to some benefits (payment for unused vacation days, etc.) if you were fired than if you quit. On the other hand, you’re also sometimes eli-

gible for unemployment when you’re fired and don’t have another job lined up, so it’s not even clear who benefits more here.

Knowing these people as you do, you might not be surprised to learn that there probably is no rational explanation. “The rational employer,” Sears says, “when a troublesome employee quits, will just breathe a sigh

of relief.” Most likely, he adds, your former boss is mad at you for quitting and is “just being petty and vindictive.”

What worries me—and more troublingly, Sears, since he’s the expert here—is that, being vindictive, your ex-employer may wish to sabotage your job prospects. Even under the best of circumstances, he notes, employees’ vulnerability to whatever a boss wants to say about them to possible future employers is a huge problem. Most of us do think about it, and it often keeps us quiescent and submissive at work when we shouldn’t be. What’s scary in your situation is that you have no way of knowing whether management will tell people that it fired you, what reason it will give for your departure, or how damaging that reason might be. You could hire a lawyer now to write a letter to your former bosses, warning that if they defame you, you could sue. This is worth the money only if you suspect that they will say things that aren’t true and will prevent you from getting another job.

The problem is that even if you sue, such cases are difficult for workers to win because employer defamation is hard to prove. “It’s hard to know what one HR person is saying to another by phone. You never know what blackballed you,” Sears says. “The ruling class is a closed club.”

But enough hand-wringing. I’m hoping you left for another job, making the blackballing concerns less immediate. Let’s not lose sight of the most salient point: This spiteful, pointless move on the part of your former bosses underscores how right you were to quit. Good riddance, and enjoy being free of these jerks. ■

COMIX NATION

JEN SORENSEN





CONTEMPORARY AND IMPERIAL MOROCCO

APRIL 24–MAY 5, 2020

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THE CONSTITUTION

A New ERA?

Once the new class of legislators is sworn in to the Virginia General Assembly in January, Democrats will control both its chambers for the first time in almost 25 years. The change may herald a national progressive victory: the passage, at long last, of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Conceived nearly a century ago to end legal distinctions based on sex, the ERA was first sent to state legislatures for ratification in 1972. Within five years, it was ratified by 35 of the 38 states required to adopt it as part of the US Constitution.

But then the ERA entered a limbo that it has not been able to escape. In 1979 a congressionally determined deadline came and went; President Jimmy Carter signed a joint resolution extending it to 1982, though scholars disagree as to whether these cutoffs are constitutional. Then a series of legislatures in more conservative states voted to revoke their ratifications—moves that may be unconstitutional.

In the 21st century, Nevada and Illinois became the 36th and 37th states, respectively, to ratify the ERA. This February, as Republicans clung to a slim majority in the state's House of Delegates, Virginia tried and failed to become No. 38. While the ERA's adoption is by no means assured (particularly with a conservative majority on the Supreme Court), the Democratic victories in Virginia will almost certainly re-launch the decades-long fight to enshrine equal rights for women in the Constitution.

—Spencer Green



Aaron Ross Coleman

After Impeachment

When it's all over, how will Americans remember Donald Trump?

As Americans, our collective desire to maintain a veneer of nationalistic piety tends to supersede our desire to tell the truth—and if the past is prologue, President Donald Trump will face no historical reckoning for his sprawling malfeasance. Over time and despite his gropes, tweets, and slurs, his lies, tantrums, and betrayals, his government shutdowns and immigrant cages, Trump will likely be remembered not as he was but as the dutiful head of state the nation needs him to be.

We've laundered the reputations of worse men. After slavery's fall, Americans feverishly recast the image of those responsible for chattel subjugation. During secession, Jefferson Davis, who would become president of the Confederacy, initially condemned restrictions on slavery as a catastrophe "worth thousands of millions of dollars." After defeat, he downplayed the "existence of African servitude" as "only an incident," joining other Southern politicians like Alexander Stephens in retroactively describing slavery as merely a vehicle to address broader issues of states' rights.

President Woodrow Wilson further obfuscated the past. At the 50th anniversary of Gettysburg, he did not mention slaveholders, focusing instead on "the splendid valor" and "manly devotion of the men then arrayed against one another." Two years later, he endorsed *The Birth of a Nation*, the film that lionized the former Confederates as insurgent Klansmen during Reconstruction. He reportedly said the movie was like "writing history with lightning."

Hollywood doubled down on this lie, transforming barons of bondage into tragic lovers living on picturesque plantations in films like *Gone With the Wind*. The same trimming and editing applied to our original sin have sanitized our national transgressions ever since. Whether naming an airport after a president who had slurred African UN delegates as "monkeys" or defending an international warmonger on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, Americans reconstruct what they don't want to recall.

This is why Toni Morrison observed that written history is filled with "erasures and absences and silences." It's why her novel *Beloved's* characters live in what she described as "a society and a system in which the conquerors write the

narrative of their lives." Ta-Nehisi Coates aptly compared this American amnesia to "the practiced habit of jabbing out one's eyes and forgetting the work of one's hands."

Yet Americans love their brightly rendered history as much as their HDTVs, and most have no desire to gaze at the dark, grainy truth. After all, false memory is what allows football fans in DC to cheer for the Redskins or Atlanta Braves fans to flail their arms like tomahawks. False memory is how we celebrate the genocidal Christopher Columbus as a daring explorer. False memory is why we set off fireworks over the nation's largest Confederate memorial on July 4. Upon the slightest confrontation with the historical record, so much that Americans hold dear falls apart.

The pain is often too much to bear for those who inherit the profits of the country's plunder. In a 2012 PBS documentary on slavery after the Civil War, the descendant of a Jim Crow plantation owner named John S. Williams was overcome with grief when she

discovered the truth about her great-grandfather, whom the family remembered as a pillar of the community. Family lore recounted that he worked a few hardened criminals on his farm and that an awful accident occurred one day when they tried to escape. This, too, was an American fairy tale. Williams, like many other plantation owners, profited from racialized peonage: a system in which debt is paid with forced labor. In 1921, when federal investigators found Williams enslaving black laborers, he killed 11 of them to bury the evidence. Hunting them down one by one, he bludgeoned some and drowned others. He even forced one to dig his own grave.

"The story came to light for me. It was, of course, totally different from the story that I had heard," the great-granddaughter said as tears pooled in her eyes. "I get so emotional when I think about not just the fact that these men were murdered but the cruelty with which it was carried out."

After slavery's fall, Americans feverishly recast the image of those responsible for chattel subjugation.



The painful truth that Williams's great-granddaughter reckoned with is what the American historical apparatus works to suppress. In the name of national innocence, in the name of American hegemony, we continuously, forcefully, willfully forget. The reflex is so strong that when *The New York Times Magazine* recently dedicated an issue to the legacy of slavery, readers convulsed. Newt Gingrich called it "a lie" and "propaganda" that the *Times* wants to "brainwash you with." A writer for the conservative website *The Federalist* labeled it a project "to delegitimize America, and further divide and demoralize its citizenry." And this impulse is bipartisan. When confronted on school integration, Joe Biden forcefully declared that he "did not oppose busing in America," despite irrefutable reporting by the *Times* that he was "a leading opponent of busing in the Senate during the 1970s and 1980s." Seen in this light, Trump's lies aren't

a deviation from traditional American revisionism. They merely await the next cadre of patriotic academics, novelists, politicians, and filmmakers eager to cast him as yet another reclaimed American champion.

To expect the country to recall Trump's legacy as vile is to expect citizens to look away from the never-ending Disney movie that is American history—something we have yet to show a willingness to do. Because if we still remember Confederate generals as dashing heroes, if we still enshrine segregationist senators as congressional philosophers, if we still celebrate incarceration enthusiasts as elder statesmen, then it is comfortably within the realm of possibility that Trump will eventually be remembered as a charismatic, pudgy grandpa who loved to wear red hats and wish people "Merry Christmas"—like a conservative Santa Claus who saved lumps of coal for migrant children. ■

To expect the country to recall Trump's legacy as vile is to expect us to look away from the never-ending Disney movie that is American history.

SNAPSHOT / PABLO SANHUEZA

Fare Enough!

A demonstrator holds a Chilean flag during an anti-government protest at the Plaza Italia in Santiago on November 9. A 30 peso (4¢) increase in the cost of a subway ride led to rallies in which more than a million Chileans objected to inequality, privatization, and social segregation.

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

LINDSEY GRAHAM, LEGAL SCHOLAR

"It's impossible to bring this case forward, in my view, fairly without us knowing who the whistle-blower is and having a chance to cross-examine them."
—Senator Lindsey Graham

The cops have stormed a bank in time to snare
The robbers. Caught red-handed, they're still there.
Their trial would hinge, per Lindsey Graham's quotes,
On who called 911 and how he votes.



The Nation.

How Much Is Too Much?

A surging egalitarian current is shifting the Democratic Party's policy mainstream.

SAM PIZZIGATI

2019

IS AMERICA'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON INEQUALITY FINALLY GETTING REAL?

IN the early going of the 2020 presidential campaign, this has become a question worth asking. White House hopefuls have been condemning the maldistribution of America's income and wealth with an intensity—and a specificity—that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago. And the rich are squirming. They see candidates proposing unprecedented taxes on their assets and even questioning their right to exist. Perhaps most worrying, this time moderates aren't exactly rushing to their defense.

At the October Democratic primary debate, for instance, Senator Bernie Sanders delivered one of his trademark blasts against the billionaire class.

"Senator Sanders is right!" responded the wealthiest candidate in the Democratic field, Tom Steyer.

That gave Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar, a self-styled champion of moderation, an opening for the evening's biggest laugh line. "No one on this stage wants to protect billionaires," she pronounced. "Not even the billionaire wants to protect billionaires!"

A good many billionaires, of course, do expect to be protected, and the unwillingness of the 2020 Democratic field to fawn over their fortunes has the awesomely affluent feeling like a persecuted minority. The nation's richest may not have felt this aggrieved since President Franklin Roosevelt declaimed, "I welcome their hatred," back in the 1930s. Calls for a wealth tax—Senator Elizabeth Warren's signature initiative—have our deepest pockets particularly pained.

"This is the fucking American Dream she is shitting on," as billionaire Leon Cooperman told *Politico*.

Has campaign 2020 indeed put America's superrich at existential risk? Or are our wealthiest merely hyper-ventilating? *The Nation* and the Institute for Policy Studies, the publisher of *Inequality.org*, decided to find out. IPS analysts first prepared a candidate questionnaire designed to divine the depth of each presidential hopeful's commitment to challenge inequalities of income and wealth. The survey then went to all the major party candidates, Democrats and Republicans alike.

But candidates have a nasty habit of ignoring questionnaires that leave them uncomfortable. So IPS analysts also scoured the printed and online record for the candidates' inequality-related plans and comments.

What has all this sleuthing found? Those who seek our nation's highest office—at least on the Democratic side—no longer see safe harbor in the warm embrace of the ultrarich. To be sure, our political class has not yet abandoned the billionaire class. But the political consensus that nurtured our contemporary top-heavy economy has cracked.

To appreciate just how much, we need to start with a little history.

In the early 1900s, after a generation of Gilded Age excess, American progressives of most every stripe arrived at a broad common vision of how best to mold a decent society. The nation needed, reformers and revolutionaries agreed, to narrow the grand divide that separated the nation's poor many from its most privileged few, and that meant focusing on both the absence of wealth and its concentration. Americans needed to battle, as publisher Joseph Pulitzer put it, "predatory poverty" as well as "predatory plutocracy."

This commitment to leveling up the downtrodden and leveling down what the philosopher Felix Adler termed "pomp and pride and power" would animate struggles for justice throughout the decades ahead and dominate the

New Deal's political discourse. The same egalitarian ethos would guide us through World War II.

But this progressive consensus on inequality did not survive the Cold War. With the capitalist-boss-baiting Soviet Union our archenemy, anyone who continued to trumpet New Deal distributional themes was suddenly deemed dangerously subversive. By the early 1960s, top Democrats were no longer talking up the importance of taxing the rich.

John F. Kennedy's New Frontier assured Americans instead that a "rising tide lifts all boats." We needn't worry about the wealthy, the new party line went. If we just cut taxes to grow the economic pie, everyone could get a bigger piece.

By the 1990s, with no one in political power worrying about the wealthy, the predictable had taken place: America's richest had become fabulously richer, amid rising poverty and flatlining wages. Republicans and Democrats shared responsibility for this. Both parties deregulated and privatized. Both lavished subsidies on the wealthy and their enterprises. Both hailed the rich as job creators.

"I'd like to create more millionaires than were created under Mr. Bush and Mr. Reagan," Bill Clinton even opined in 1992's first general election presidential debate.

Clinton succeeded at that task, as has every president since he left office. Will that pattern change if voters choose one of the candidates running to replace Donald Trump? Are these office seekers pushing policies and programs that hold out hope for a significantly more equal America?

Class wars unfold on multiple fronts, and virtually all national policies and programs affect how equally we distribute our income and wealth. But some fronts affect income and wealth distribution more directly than others. The *Nation*/IPS inequality questionnaire highlights these battlefronts, focusing on struggles that involve everything from taxes and intergenerational transfers of wealth to CEO pay and the composition of corporate boards.

The questionnaire is online at inequality.org/2020, as are the candidates' full responses. No candidates seeking the GOP's 2020 nomination chose to complete the survey, and none of them have made much of an effort on the campaign trail to address the inequality concerns that it raises.

"Our political class has not yet abandoned our billionaire class. But the political consensus that has nurtured our top-heavy economy has cracked."

Sam Pizzigati coedits Inequality.org. His recent books include The Case for a Maximum Wage and The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph Over Plutocracy That Created the American Middle Class, 1900–1970.

The Democrats who chose not to complete the survey, by contrast, have commented on many of the questions it poses. The profiles that follow—and the additional profiles in the longer online version of this analysis—rest on those comments as well as the completed surveys. The profiles appear in order of the latest national poll standing.

Joe BIDEN

The United States, the Biden campaign proclaims, “wasn’t built by Wall Street bankers and CEOs and hedge fund managers.” We need “an economy that rewards those who actually do the work.”

On the other hand, he told a deep-pocket fundraiser in June that we don’t need “to demonize anybody who has made money” off our existing economy. “Nobody has to be punished” to address “income inequality as large as we have,” he added. In a Biden administration, “nothing would fundamentally change.”

What exactly does he mean? We don’t know. His campaign didn’t complete the *Nation*/IPS inequality questionnaire and hasn’t released plans detailed enough to judge his likely impact on inequality. We do know that Wall Street bankers, CEOs, and hedge fund managers consider Biden’s tax plan “far less extreme” than those of his two chief rivals, Warren and Sanders, according to a *Forbes* analysis.

Biden has not proposed a wealth tax or a marked increase in the highest income tax rate. And unlike most other top Democratic presidential contenders, he has not yet supported a financial transaction tax on Wall Street highfliers.

Still, the wealthy would feel pinched if the proposals Biden endorses turned up in the tax code. He supports undoing the 2017 Trump tax giveaway to the rich and ending the preferential tax treatment of their capital gains.

He has also come out in favor of eliminating the stepped-up basis loophole, a tax code provision that allows the rich to sidestep taxes on assets that have appreciated mightily over the years.

Other Biden proposals have the potential to shift who gets what as well. He’s pledging to “create a cabinet-level working group” that would within his first 100 days “deliver a plan to dramatically increase union density and address economic inequality.” And he endorses denying federal dollars to “employers who engage in union-busting activities, participate in wage theft, or violate labor law.”

Elizabeth WARREN

On one level, the Massachusetts senator is telling an inequality story that the movers and shakers in Democratic Party circles over recent decades would find totally unobjectionable.

The nation needs to make the investments, Warren said in October, that give every kid in America “a chance to make it.” The wealthy just need to “pitch in” to help make that opportunity possible.

“I’m really shocked at the notion that anyone thinks I’m punitive,” she added. “Look, I don’t have a beef with billionaires.”

But plenty of billionaires have a beef with her. They see her signature tax proposal—an annual levy on personal fortunes worth over \$50 million—as a slap against their success. Financial industry billionaire Ron Baron called



“Nobody has to be punished... [to address] income inequality as large as we have.”

—Joe Biden



“What’s ridiculous is billionaires who think they can buy the presidency to keep the system rigged for themselves.”

—Elizabeth Warren



The 400 richest Americans pay just 23 percent of their income in taxes. Bernie Sanders would more than triple that, to 74.8 percent.

Warren’s wealth tax proposal “pretty nuts” on CNBC’s *Squawk Box*. Starbucks billionaire Howard Schultz deemed it “ridiculous” on NPR’s *Morning Edition*.

“What’s ‘ridiculous,’” countered Warren, “is billionaires who think they can buy the presidency to keep the system rigged for themselves while opportunity slips away for everyone else.”

“We need to make,” she says on her *Nation*/IPS questionnaire, “big structural change to the economy.”

Warren’s wealth tax proposal—originally a 2 percent annual levy on household assets over \$50 million, with a 3 percent rate over \$1 billion—would certainly help restructure America’s wealth distribution. Economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman point out that David and Charles Koch held a combined fortune of \$107.0 billion in 2018. If that proposed wealth tax had been in effect since 1982, the Kochs would have had to get by on a mere \$37.8 billion.

In early November, Warren upped the wealth tax ante, raising her proposal’s top rate to 6 percent as part of her blueprint to fund Medicare for All.

Among the other Warren plans that would tap accumulated wealth: To finance expanded affordable housing programs, she would lower the threshold that triggers the federal estate tax from \$22.8 million to \$7.0 million and raise the estate tax rate to as much as 75 percent on bequest values over \$1 billion.

Like Biden, Warren says she wants to sweep away the obstacles that make life miserable for workers hoping to organize. Unlike Biden, however, she’s also challenging the structure of corporate governance. Her Accountable Capitalism Act would require large corporations to become federally chartered and would empower workers to elect at least 40 percent of their boards of directors.

Bernie SANDERS

The 2016 Sanders presidential campaign, many pundits now acknowledge, moved the Democratic Party’s mainstream to the left. What the conventional wisdom hasn’t yet realized: The party’s leftward shift has emboldened him to stake out ever more ambitious progressive territory.

We see that dynamic most clearly on the idea of annually taxing wealth, a notion that Sanders floated back in 1997. Now he has detailed his wealth tax vision in a plan that one-ups the initiative Warren announced this year. Under her revised plan, wealth over \$1 billion would face a 6 percent annual tax. Under the Sanders plan, Americans with fortunes over \$10 billion would face an 8 percent annual wealth tax levy.

America’s 400 richest people pay just 23.0 percent of their income in local, state, and federal taxes. The original Warren wealth tax, Saez and Zucman calculate, would nearly double that rate, to 45.9 percent. The Sanders proposal would more than triple it, to 74.8 percent.

On corporate governance, there’s the same Warren-Sanders two-step. He envisions workers taking 45 percent of corporate board seats, compared with her 40 percent. His Corporate Accountability and Democracy Plan would also move workers into ownership. Under the proposal, major corporations would have to transfer at least 2 percent of

company stock to their workers every year until employees owned at least 20 percent of the corporate operation.

The latest Sanders economic justice initiative takes on the corporate pay practices that contribute so much to income inequality. In 1965, the Economic Policy Institute notes, top US CEOs took home 20 times the average worker's pay in their industry. Last year, reports a new IPS study, 50 US CEOs took home more than 1,000 times their typical worker's pay.

Thanks to the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act, publicly traded corporations must now annually disclose their ratio of CEO to median worker pay. Sanders would place consequences on these disclosures: Corporations with CEOs making more than 50 times the typical worker's pay, under his plan, would face higher corporate income tax rates. The wider their corporate pay gap, the steeper the tax. If this plan had been part of the tax code last year, Sanders writes in his *Nation*/IPS inequality questionnaire, Walmart would have paid up to \$793.8 million more in taxes and JPMorgan Chase an additional \$991.6 million.

Pete BUTTIGIEG

Last spring, the South Bend, Indiana, mayor was introducing himself as a pragmatic pol not afraid to take on wealth and power. In a *New York Times* interview he declared his support for a wealth tax and welcomed the idea of raising the top income tax rate from its current 37 percent to 49.9999 percent. (The Obama years ended with a top tax rate of 39.6 percent.)

In an interview with CNBC's John Harwood in April, Buttigieg defended inconveniencing the rich. We shouldn't pretend, he argued, "that you can make everybody better off while making nobody worse off."

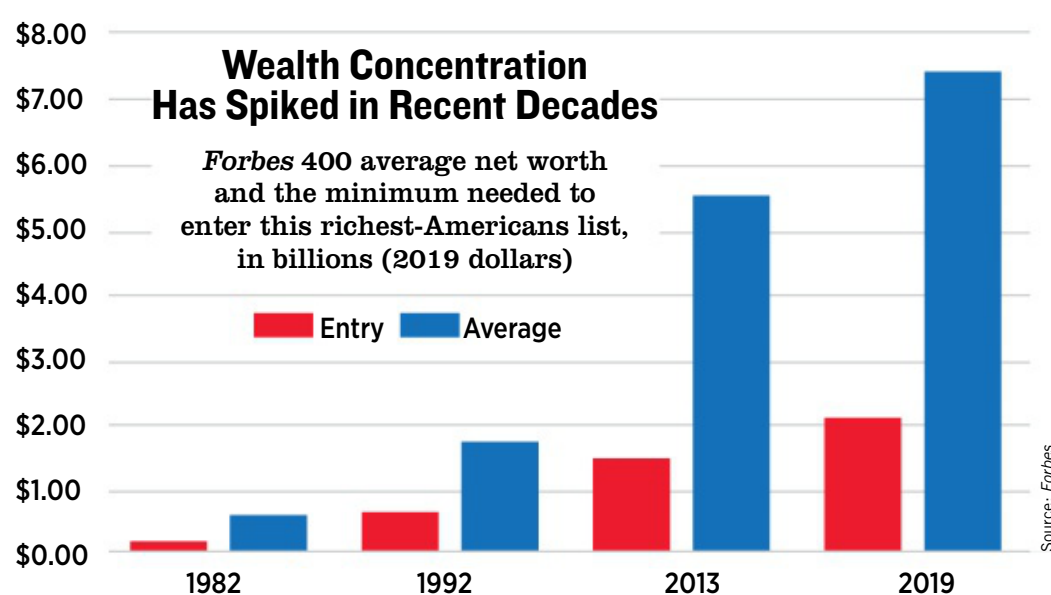
These days, as he pivots to pick up the moderate voters abandoning Biden, "Mayor Pete" seems to be soft-pedaling positions that might brand him as any sort of class warrior. At the October candidate debate, he rushed away from an opportunity to explain his case for a wealth tax. And the Buttigieg campaign declined to respond to the *Nation*/IPS inequality survey.

His website mostly highlights now-standard Democratic anti-poverty prescriptions, from a \$15 minimum hourly wage to increased federal funding for "schools with the highest economic and racial inequity." The section on an "inclusive economy" focuses rather limitedly on knocking down "unfair barriers to entrepreneurship." But under "organized labor," his campaign still hints at broader inequality themes.

"Decades ago, we were promised a rising tide of economic growth that would lift all boats. We got the rising tide—GDP went up, productivity went up—but our paychecks didn't show it," the site reads. "Our economy has been tilted toward the wealthy and away from the middle and working class because the people in power designed our laws and policies that way."

Kamala HARRIS

Mainstream commentators see the California senator taking an approach to narrowing inequality that avoids "the anti-Wall Street rhetoric" of Sanders and Warren, as Matt Stevens has written in



"[We shouldn't pretend] that you can make everybody better off while making nobody worse off."

—Pete Buttigieg



Kamala Harris would offer lower-income households as much as \$6,000 a year in tax credits.



Andrew Yang is skeptical of a wealth tax and said it would have "massive" implementation and compliance problems.

The New York Times. Harris would narrow the gap "by significantly cutting taxes for low- and moderate-income households" instead of raising taxes on the nation's wealthiest, Howard Gleckman of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center has added.

In fact, Harris's proposals follow the basic Warren and Sanders playbook. They would tax the rich to pay for programs to boost the nation's most vulnerable. Her boldest economic proposal, the Lift the Middle Class Act, would offer households making less than \$60,000 annually as much as \$6,000 in tax credits refunded monthly, with the money coming primarily from repealing the rich-friendly Trump tax cut.

The Harris version of Medicare for All would rest on much the same tax-the-rich moves the Sanders plan suggests. But she would limit her plan's premium fee to households making over \$100,000 a year. To fund a \$315 billion plan to raise teacher salaries, she calls for strengthening the estate tax and cracking down on loopholes that let our wealthy avoid taxes on "estates worth multiple millions or billions."

Harris is vowing to "flip the script and finally hold corporations accountable for pay inequality in America." To narrow gender pay disparities, she says she wants to leverage the power of the public purse by requiring corporations to obtain an "equal pay certification" before they can gain lucrative government contracts.

Andrew YANG

Mainstream commentators have sometimes blamed the growing US economic divide on technological change. That explanation has proved less than compelling. If technology were driving inequality, analysts note, then America's peers around the world ought to have experienced the same income chasms. But they haven't.

Entrepreneur Andrew Yang has a new twist on the technological change theme. He sees a third of America's workers losing their jobs to automation over the next 12 years. In response, he has proposed a Freedom Dividend, a \$1,000 monthly check for every American age 18 or older.

The funding for this basic income initiative would come from a variety of sources, including two new taxes. The first is a European-style value-added tax, a levy

(continued on page 26)

SURVIVING INDONESIA'S ANTIGAY CLAMPDOWN

They met, fell in love,
and were nearly torn
apart in a country where
LGBTQ people are
increasingly persecuted.

**NICOLE EINBINDER AND
GABRIELA BHASKAR**



WHEN NADIA MET RANA AT A 7-ELEVEN IN JAKARTA, THE CAPITAL OF Indonesia, it was love at first sight.

Nadia, who is now 23, had moved to the city from her hometown a couple of hours away to study at an Islamic university. She had recently broken up with a high school boyfriend, Imam, turned off by his abusive behavior. She had also started to act on her growing attraction to women, spending hours on the Internet conversing with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities that, while suppressed in real life, could flourish on social media.

One day in the spring of 2015, Nadia (a pseudonym used to protect her identity) started chatting online with Rana, now 25, who asked her to meet. The rest is history. “She is precious,” said Rana when we met the couple last year. “I put her needs, what is best for her, above my own needs. I always wish her the very best.”

“She is everything to me,” said Nadia.

At first glance, the women seem like nothing more than a young couple in love. However, their relationship is highly fraught: Indonesia, a Muslim-majority country, has grown increasingly intolerant of the LGBTQ community in recent years. Human Rights Watch reports that since 2016, Indonesia has seen a rise in hateful rhetoric and violence against LGBTQ people—from police raids to threats by influential politicians and religious organizations.

According to experts and activists, the situation can be especially precarious for lesbians living in a patriarchal society, where gender inequality and violence against women are prevalent. “It’s very common for Indonesians of a certain age to be pushed to get married,” said Teguh Iman Affandi, a board member of the Jakarta-based LGBTQ organization Suara Kita.

Rana said that she began to feel attracted to girls in junior high school. She was 16 when an *uwa*, or aunty, found her in her room with a girl she was dating. She immediately told Rana’s cousin, whom Rana lived with at the time and considered an adoptive mother. “I am so disappointed with you,” her cousin told Rana.

Rana had never admitted to being gay before. But something inside her couldn’t reject the notion. “I was in pain,” she said about that encounter. “How come I dare to hurt her? I did feel guilty, but you know, I discovered my true identity—that I am lesbian—and whatever happens, I have to accept myself for who I am. And so does my [family].”

Nadia, on the other hand, was less sure about her sexuality while in high school. She was attracted to girls, but she felt that she needed to date boys. Although she publicly dated Imam (also a pseudonym)—much to the satisfaction of her mother—she secretly led another life online. She said social media was how she began to discover her sexual identity.

We asked Nadia what it was like to date a man while leading this secret life online. She paused to consider her words. “He knew that I was a lesbian,” she said, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. “His reason [to date] was, he wanted to change me to be a better person. To be straight.”

Nadia broke up with Imam during her first semester at the university. He was violent and often beat her. “I realized that was his true self,” she said. “I was angry. We had just been dating, and he was abusive. What would happen if we got married?”

The next semester, she met Rana.

INDONESIA HAS HISTORICALLY HAD A REPUTATION FOR tolerance. Its 1945 Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and the state’s secular ideology, Pancasila, encourages pluralism. The transgender community, known as *waria*, existed harmoniously in this Southeast Asian archipelago for hundreds of years.

But the country is now in the grips of what Human Rights Watch describes as a government-driven moral panic that has targeted sexual and gender minorities and fueled fear in the community. While homosexuality is not criminalized—except in conservative Aceh province, which follows Sharia, or Islamic canonical law—there has been an increase in bylaws targeting LGBTQ people. In November 2018, for example, a city in West Sumatra passed a regulation to fine gay or transgender people who engage in behavior considered immoral.

Government officials have made public comments attacking the community—from the mayor of Tangerang, who described homosexuality as a psychological illness, to former defense minister Ryamizard Ryacudu, who derided the struggle for LGBTQ rights as an outsiders’ proxy war more dangerous than nuclear war. There has been a surge in raids on private LGBTQ gatherings and arrests under the country’s anti-pornography laws. In 2017, Human Rights Watch documented, at least 300 people were apprehended by police on suspicion of being LGBTQ.

“The biggest challenge is they’ve undergone a character assassination,” said Kyle Knight, a Human Rights Watch researcher. “They’re just walking on pins and needles, in a way, [instead of enjoying] the pluralism that Indonesia is known for.”

The mounting antigay rhetoric comes as religious conservatives continue to gain influence across the country, spreading their message with rallies and viral social media posts. Some argued that conservative politicians and Islamists were using the LGBTQ community as a scapegoat to amass votes heading into the country’s presidential elections, which took place in April. According to a survey in Indonesia published in 2018, almost 88 percent of respondents said they viewed LGBTQ people as a threat, and more than 81 percent said that being LGBTQ was prohibited by religion.

To appeal to conservative voters and prove his bona fides, President Joko Widodo, a moderate who was elected in 2014 on a platform that emphasized human rights and democracy but was unable to fulfill many of those prom-

“He knew that I was a lesbian.... He wanted to change me to be a better person. To be straight.”

—Nadia

Nadia and Rana in Jakarta, October 2018 (opposite page). Indonesia’s President Joko Widodo (below right) with running mate Ma’ruf Amin in April 2019.



ises in his first five-year term, chose prominent Muslim cleric Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate—despite the latter's track record of supporting female genital mutilation, issuing religious decrees condemning sexual and religious minorities, and supporting the criminalization of LGBTQ activities. Widodo's opponent, former military commander Prabowo Subianto, has connections to hard-line Islamist groups and has been accused of having ties to widespread human rights violations.

Indonesia's conservative movement is far-flung, ranging from the radical Islamist group Hizbut Tahrir—which supports the creation of a global caliphate and was banned in the country in 2017 because it is considered a threat to national unity—to the violent, vigilante-like Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). Habib Muhsin Ahmad Alatas, the chairman of the FPI Syura Council, said in an interview that the biggest challenges facing the country are liberalism and secularism. He said the group's main goal was to bolster religion and described LGBTQ people as immoral and the enemy of Indonesia. (He even claimed their behavior caused the devastating earthquake and tsunami that hit the eastern Indonesian city of Palu in September 2018.)

"The Islamists are always looking for new issues to mobilize people on. Their biggest thing is informal activism in the form of forming organizations, mobilizing protests...so LGBT is offering them a platform," said Nava Nuraniyah, an analyst at the Jakarta-based Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict. "Even if you talk to so-called moderate Muslims, they will not tolerate LGBT."

Widodo won reelection, but the situation for the LGBTQ community hasn't improved. Dédé Oetomo, one of Indonesia's most prominent LGBTQ activists and the founder of the LGBTQ rights group Gaya Nusantara, wrote in an e-mail that most activists and allies don't think anything will change under Widodo's government. Oetomo pointed out that it recently revived plans for a new criminal code with many problematic articles, including a ban on sex outside marriage—effectively criminalizing same-sex relations.

"Islamists are always looking for new issues to mobilize people on.... LGBT is offering them a platform."

—Nava Nuraniyah

AFTER A FEW INSEPARABLE MONTHS SPENT DATING, Nadia and Rana decided to move in together in Nadia's boarding house in the fall of 2015. Their landlord thought the girls were just good friends. "It was happy, comfortable. It was just the two of us," Rana said.

But a year and a half later, Nadia's mother discovered that her daughter liked girls and forced her to get back

together with Imam, the abusive boyfriend. He was from a respected family and was now a police officer. For Nadia's parents, who were highly regarded in their town, social standing was everything. Nadia's mother was blunt. "Since you are a lesbian," she said, "no guys will want to have a relationship with you. No man will love you except [Imam]."

In September 2017, only months after they were pushed back together, Imam went to the home of Nadia's parents to formally propose. She desperately wanted to decline, but she felt she couldn't. "Culture says that women are property of the family. That's why Nadia was pushed to be married," said Wide Afriandy, an Indonesian attorney who has supported Nadia and Rana. "People still think that being straight is good. To make her straight is... showing the parents' love."

In October, Rana learned of her girlfriend's wedding. She said she was heartbroken when she found out.

Nadia and Imam moved in together. For a moment, she thought the marriage could work. She couldn't be with the woman she loved, but she could please her family and assume the role of Imam's wife.

Marital bliss didn't last long. Imam quickly resumed his abuse, forcing Nadia to have sex with him. Her parents saw the black and blue marks on her body, but they took his side. "Well, you can always get better," Nadia's parents once told her in response to the violence. When Nadia tried to reject Imam's sexual advances, he yelled that she had to submit to him. "The pain, the violence, yes, they were there," she said. "He forced me roughly."

Less than a month after the wedding, Nadia discovered she was pregnant. Soon after, she called Rana. "I'm running away," Nadia told her. "I was abused." Within minutes, Rana was on her way to meet Nadia. Their time together didn't last long: Nadia's parents found their daughter and came for her. Nadia's mother told her that she could divorce Imam as long as she returned home.

"We tried to believe in her parents," Rana said.

Demonstrators hold an anti-LGBTQ rally outside a mosque in Aceh province, Indonesia, February 2018.

IN DECEMBER 2017, NADIA DISCOVERED MESSAGES to and from Imam on her mother's phone; the pair were plotting to get him back together with Nadia. She knew she had to escape. She reunited with Rana in Jakarta, and the two women found a place to stay. The room was tiny, with just a mattress on the floor and no bathroom, but it cost only 500,000 rupiah (about \$35) per month.

Nadia was a couple of months pregnant by then, and money was tight. Despite the challenges, she was determined to create a life for herself, Rana, and the baby. But Nadia's parents found her again. Her mother demanded that Nadia return with them, screaming to the landlady that she was allowing a lesbian couple to stay at her home. Nadia and Rana were trapped. Everyone in the house knew their secret, and they had nowhere else to go. "I felt mixed feelings—angry, sad, betrayed," Nadia said.

She went home that day, but this time she refused to go without Rana by her side.



As they left the boarding house, their landlady advised Nadia, “It’s better if you are still together with your husband. I was often beaten up by [my husband]. But I endured.”

For Rana, life in Nadia’s hometown was tough. She stayed with one of Nadia’s relatives and wasn’t allowed to leave the house because the family was so ashamed. Nadia’s mother taunted her, and Rana was terrified of Imam’s authority as a police officer. She felt like a prisoner.

In January 2018, Nadia’s mother took the two women to an *ustad*, a religious leader in the community. There they were forced to undergo an Islamic exorcism, known as a *rugyah*, to purge the evil spirits that they were told made them attracted to women. The use of exorcisms against LGBTQ people aligns with Indonesia’s increased intolerance toward the community. This year the mayor of Padang told the Indonesian news site *Tirto* that he had ordered the arrest of LGBTQ people so religious authorities could conduct exorcisms on them. He said he believed they were possessed by demons. The TV show *Rugyah* depicts exorcism as a form of “conversion therapy.”

At the *ustad*, Rana went first. The *ustad* said they were possessed by evil spirits that were deeply in love and his duty was to eradicate those spirits so that Nadia’s marriage with Imam could survive. He grabbed a thick wooden stick and began to beat Rana. She described the pain as torture, so excruciating that she later developed a fever.

Then it was Nadia’s turn. She was three months pregnant at the time and screamed for help as her mother watched silently. Rana said all she could think about was whether Nadia and the baby would be all right.

Soon after, Imam returned and demanded that Nadia resume her role as his wife. She said no, telling him she wanted to be with Rana. In response, he threatened Rana, telling her to go back to Jakarta. Imam later attacked her, drenching her shirt in blood, and Rana recalled Nadia’s mother telling her that she deserved it.

Rana returned to Jakarta after the episode. Nadia was trapped with Imam, instructed to be a good wife. What she didn’t know was that Rana hadn’t given up on her. On Valentine’s Day in 2018, Rana sent a desperate Facebook message to Suara Kita’s Affandi. “My friend is a lesbian,” the message begins. “She was forced to get married by her mom. She wants to divorce her husband, while her mom wants her to stay.”

Affandi said he connected Rana with a lawyer to help Nadia file for divorce on the grounds of domestic violence. “Nadia’s is the most complicated case I’ve seen. She is lesbian, Muslim. It really affects my feelings,” he said. “In order to ‘make’ them heterosexual, lesbians get raped. There’s no data, but it’s common.”

After a week of living in Imam’s house, Nadia escaped once again, joining Rana in Jakarta.



Nadia’s, Rana’s, and their son’s hands as they hug in Jakarta in October 2018. The couple must pretend to be sisters in public.

“I do experience all those things of being a father, being her husband, being her soul mate. I feel all the responsibilities to protect her.”

—Rana

Nicole Einbinder is a reporter at Business Insider. Gabriela Bhaskar is a photojournalist and an adjunct professor at Columbia’s Graduate School of Journalism.

ON JULY 3, 2018, NADIA gave birth to a healthy boy. He is a happy child, spoiled by his two mothers. On the day we met, at the Suara Kita office, he playfully sucked on Rana’s hand as she patted his behind. He didn’t yet know that his parents’ love is forbidden. He didn’t yet know the challenges he’d face in Indonesia as a kid with two mothers. Nadia and Rana worry about his future in a country where homosexuality is taboo and hope that their son will accept them for who they are.

The time leading up to his birth was difficult. The two women sold accessories at a shop in Soekarno Hatta International Airport near Jakarta. For two months, after her family threatened to take away the child, Nadia lived in a safe house for domestic abuse survivors. Her sexual orientation remained a secret while she was there.

Rana said she still can’t believe she’s a parent. While she feels sad that her son has never met his biological father, she said she will protect him no matter what, that their bond is deeper than DNA.

“It is me who accompanied [Nadia] from the moment she was pregnant until she delivered the baby,” Rana said. “I do experience all those things of being a father, being her husband, being her soul mate. I [feel] all the responsibilities to protect her.”

For now, they live in a rented house with neighbors who think they’re sisters. They try to ignore the local gossip that Nadia, as a single mother, must be a home-wrecker. They are afraid of what might happen if their true relationship is discovered. “As the LGBT community, we also have rights,” Rana said. “We live in this country, and we have rights.”

Rana and Nadia’s dream is to one day get married and raise their son in the open as an acknowledged family. But they can’t. They can’t go on date nights or stroll hand in hand at the park. Behind closed doors, they are a family. Everywhere else, they are two sisters raising Nadia’s baby.

As the interview came to a close, Nadia slowly began to layer up. During our hours of conversation, as she grew more comfortable, she had taken off her hijab to reveal a head of long, thick brown hair. She said that as a kid, before attending the Islamic university, she loved dressing like a tomboy. She hopes to finish her studies one day.

Now it was time to leave the protection of Suara Kita’s four walls and go outside. Rana grabbed the diaper bag and toys, whispering in Nadia’s ear and wrapping her arm around her waist. We called a taxi and stepped into Jakarta’s tumultuous rain.

“I describe our relationship as strong women and strong mothers,” Rana said. “We will do our best for him. We will do our best to make him a good person.”

With that, they were off: two women fighting against all odds to be together in the country they love, in the country that grows increasingly intolerant of who they are. ■

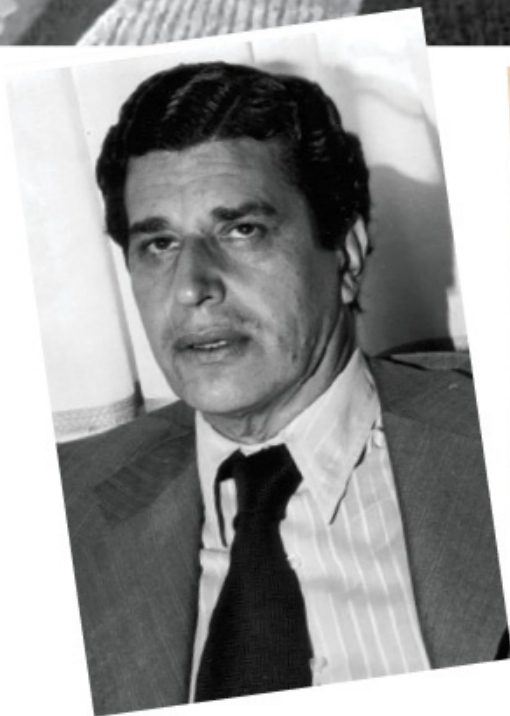
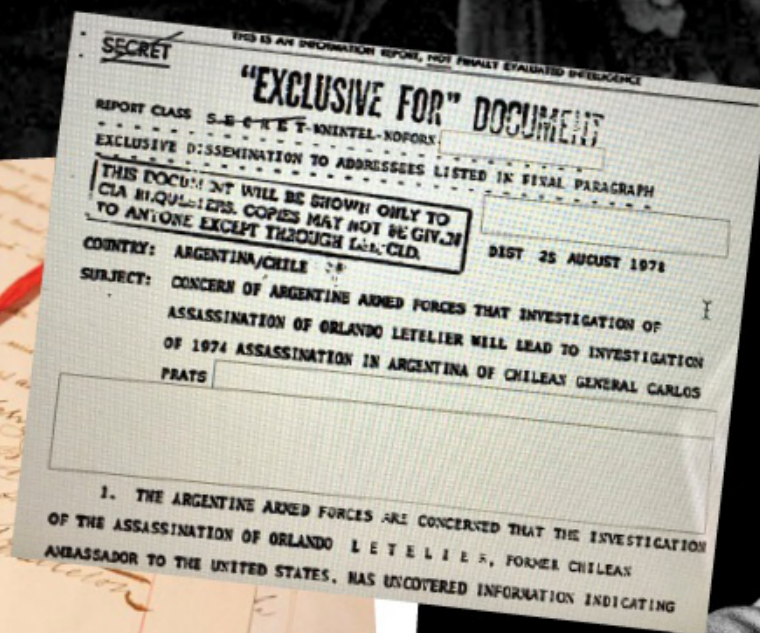


Las Madres, women whose children were among the thousands disappeared during Argentina's military dictatorship, protest in November 1977.

ARGENTINA DECLASSIFIED

How secret US intelligence files provide history's verdict on the repression of the "Dirty War."

PETER KORNBLUH



Héctor Hidalgo Solá, Argentina's ambassador to Venezuela, was abducted off the streets of Buenos Aires, then tortured and killed by the military regime in 1977.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: AP PHOTO; MUSEUM OF MEMORY AND HUMAN RIGHTS; US NATIONAL ARCHIVES (2); PUBLIC CONSULTATION DATABASE

WHEN AMBASSADOR HÉCTOR HIDALGO Solá was abducted off a busy Buenos Aires street on July 18, 1977, his family had little idea what had happened to him. Unlike many of the estimated 30,000 Argentine *desaparecidos*—the people disappeared by agents of the country's military dictatorship—Hidalgo Solá was not a liberal, a leftist, or an armed militant opposed to the regime. He was, in fact, the military government's appointed diplomatic representative to Venezuela.

In that capacity, however, Hidalgo Solá opened his embassy doors to prominent exiles, including labor leaders, politicians, and relatives of the disappeared seeking answers on the fate of their loved ones. When Emilio Mignone, whose daughter was one of the victims, met

with Hidalgo Solá in Caracas, the ambassador told him he would go to Buenos Aires to persuade the military government to change its repressive policies. If he tried that, Mignone warned him that they would kill him.

This past spring, nearly 42 years after Hidalgo Solá's disappearance, the Trump administration declassified some 47,000 pages of secret US intelligence files on the "Dirty War" that Argentina's military government waged against its own people. More than 7,000 CIA, FBI, Pentagon, and National Security Council (NSC) records—now posted on a specially created US government website at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence—shed considerable light on the state of terror that existed in Argentina from 1976 to 1983, when the military held power. The detailed documents provide extensive new evidence on the infrastructure of repres-



The documents constitute a gruesome catalog of crimes against human rights.

sion, Argentina's role in the international terrorism campaign known as Operation Condor, and most important, the fate of hundreds of *desaparecidos* who were kidnapped, tortured, and murdered—among them Hidalgo Solá.

"Suspicion will fall on military hardliners who were upset last year when Hidalgo Solá received at his embassy a labor leader ousted after the March 24, 1976 coup," states one secret intelligence assessment filed just eight days after the ambassador disappeared. FBI sources believed he had been eliminated because the military suspected him of providing passports to exiled opponents of the regime in Venezuela, according to another report. "Hidalgo Solá was kidnapped and assassinated by a special group which has worked for the State Intelligence Secretariat (SIDE)," asserts a secret CIA intelligence cable, which identified the agents responsible and provided an address for the secret torture center where he was allegedly held.

On April 12, these documents were included in the thousands of declassified records formally turned over to Argentina during an official presentation at the National Archives in Washington, DC. Along with Argentine diplomats and US officials, several family members of victims attended the solemn ceremony. Among them was the ambassador's granddaughter Azul Hidalgo Solá.

"DECLASSIFICATION DIPLOMACY"

THE ARGENTINA DECLASSIFICATION PROJECT, AS IT is officially known in US government circles, is one of those rare cases in which Donald Trump completed rather than reversed a policy initiated by his predecessor. When Fernando Cutz, then the NSC's senior director for Western Hemisphere affairs, briefed the new president in preparation for the April 2017 state visit of Argentine President Mauricio Macri, he explained to Trump that Macri personally requested the special declassification when Obama visited Buenos Aires a year earlier. Trump had personal ties to Macri: Decades before, they bar-hopped together while their fathers negotiated real estate deals in New York; more recently, the Trump Organization sought Macri's assistance in its plans to construct a Trump Tower in Buenos Aires. "It helped to be able to present the project as a Macri ask rather than an Obama initiative," Cutz recalled.

The real genesis of the Argentina Declassification Project, however, started with a presidential scheduling faux pas. In the spring of 2016, the Obama administration arranged a historic two-day trip for the president to Havana and, from there, a three-day trip to Argentina. The timing of the high-profile state visits was determined, in part, by the fact that it was spring break for Obama's two daughters, and he wanted them to vacation in Cuba as well as in Patagonia in southern Argentina.

But the White House announcement that the US president would be in Buenos Aires on March 24, 2016—by coincidence the 40th anniversary of the bloody military takeover—sparked an outcry from human rights groups in Argentina. The United States was still viewed,

in the words of Argentine Nobel Peace Prize laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, as "an accomplice of coups d'état in this region." Massive protests, with banners declaring "Day of Memory: Obama Get Out," were threatened. In meetings with Macri, human rights activists, led by the famed Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, demanded that he ask Obama to declassify intelligence records that might help them to locate their missing sons and daughters, and even the grandchildren who had been born in secret detention centers and then adopted by military families after their mothers were executed.

To redress this serious affront to the victims' families, the White House and the Macri government orchestrated a round of what I call "declassification diplomacy"—the use of secret US documents to advance bilateral relations. On the morning of March 24, Obama and Macri visited the Parque de la Memoria (Remembrance Park) in Buenos Aires to pay their respects to the victims of the Dirty War. "Today, in response to a request from President Macri, and to continue helping the families of the victims find some of the truth and justice they deserve, I can announce that the United States government will declassify even more documents from that period, including, for the first time, military and intelligence records," Obama stated in a poignant speech. "I believe we have a responsibility to confront the past with honesty and transparency."

In June 2016, the White House issued a "tasker" to all US national security agencies; titled "Argentina Declassification Project," it mandated an 18-month file search and review of relevant records. "The Administration continues to support efforts to clarify the facts surrounding human rights abuses, acts of terrorism, and political violence in Argentina during the 'Dirty War' period from 1975 through 1984," the directive stated, and it called on the national security agencies "to prioritize support for this effort." According to John Fitzpatrick, who directed the NSC's Office of Records Access and Information Security Management at the time, almost 400 archivists, analysts, Freedom of Information Act officers, and records managers drawn from 16 different government agencies participated in finding and processing the documents, expending more than 30,000 work hours to complete the project.

Before Obama left office, his administration released the first two tranches of records. And during an April 2017 summit, Trump handed Macri a pen drive containing the third tranche. Predictably, Trump marked the final release of these documents in April by proclaiming it the biggest ever. "The release of records," Trump wrote in a letter to Macri, "constitutes the largest declassification of United States Government records directly to a foreign government in history."

NAMING NAMES

WHEN INTELLIGENCE DOCUMENTS ARE DECLASSIFIED, they're usually replete with heavy redactions—swaths of information blacked out in the name of national security or to protect covert "sources and methods." But because of the meticulous quality control exercised by an unheralded NSC records manager

named John Powers, the released CIA, FBI, and Defense Intelligence Agency records on Argentina are far less censored than previous special declassifications. This unique transparency has rendered them far more valuable to historians, as well as to the legal investigators who continue to prosecute these crimes against humanity.

As a collection, the documents constitute a gruesome and sadistic catalog of state terrorism. For example, one CIA cable reports that several months after the 1976 coup, federal police rounded up and murdered 30 militants en masse and then scattered their body parts—through the use of dynamite—in an open field “as a warning to leftist extremists.” Another FBI report provides details of how security forces intercepted and stole a funeral hearse carrying the remains of Marcos Osatinsky, a leader of a leftist guerrilla group called the Montoneros, “to prevent the body from being subjected to an autopsy, which would have clearly shown he had been tortured.” At least two dozen FBI and CIA cables record a SIDE operation to kidnap, torture, and execute two Cuban Embassy officers suspected of aiding militants in Argentina. After the Cubans were murdered, according to one FBI report marked “secret/eyes only,” “their bodies were cemented into one large storage drum and thrown into the Rio Lujan” near Buenos Aires. One State Department cable describes how security agents detained and tortured a wheelchair-bound psychologist for the purpose of gaining information about one of her patients.

Torture was routine, reported Patricia Derian, then the assistant secretary of state for human rights, after a fact-finding trip to Argentina. “The electric ‘picana,’ something like a supercharged cattle prod, is still apparently a favorite tool, as is the ‘submarine’ treatment (immersion of the head in a tub of water, urine, excrement, blood, or a combination of these),” she said in a declassified summary of abuses. “There is no longer any doubt that Argentina has the worst human rights record in South America.”

Of course, details about such atrocities have been in the public domain for years, as surviving victims have stepped forward and hundreds of human rights trials in Argentina have presented evidence and testimony. But in a break from the strictures of secrecy, many of the recently declassified documents go beyond a description of the human rights violations and identify the violators. “These documents name names. They name the names of the perpetrators and the names of their victims,” observes my colleague Carlos Osorio, a senior analyst at the National Security Archive, who provided extensive expertise and support to the Argentina Declassification Project. “And because they name those names, they provide a level of truth and accountability that many other declassification projects have failed to achieve.”

Moreover, hundreds of reports by FBI agent Robert Scherrer, who consistently provided the most detailed intelligence on the operations and abuses of the Argentine security forces, contain the unredacted identities of his confidential sources, thereby providing a master list of the individuals who witnessed, knew about, or were directly involved in the apparatus of repression. Although many of his sources are now deceased, the uncensored records will allow human rights investigators to pinpoint who inside the Argentine military, intelligence, and police were privy to details about specific

atrocities—information that will advance a number of ongoing human rights investigations.

CONDOR 1

BASED IN BUENOS AIRES, SCHERRER BECAME THE lead FBI investigator of the September 21, 1976, car-bomb assassination of former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier and his 25-year-old colleague Ronni Moffitt at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC. Scherrer’s famous “Chilbom” report was the first—and for years the only—partially declassified document that mentioned Operation Condor, identifying it as a “recently established [organization] between cooperating intelligence services in South America.” The intelligence Scherrer gathered suggested that the Letelier-Moffitt assassination was a possible “third phase” of the Condor mission spearheaded by Gen. Augusto Pinochet of Chile and his secret police, the DINA.

Scherrer’s Chilbom cable has now been declassified completely unredacted, and the identity of his source has been revealed as an Argentine Army intelligence operative involved in death squad efforts in Europe. “Source is Dr. Arturo Horacio Poire,” the document states, “who is a member of the Argentine special group, which will possibly participate in the third phase of ‘Operation Condor.’” The identification of the source has opened the door to renewed investigation into Condor’s efforts to extend its repression abroad.

But the unredacted version of Scherrer’s cable is only one of dozens of exceptionally detailed FBI and CIA records on Operation Condor found in the Argentina collection. They provide a far more comprehensive history of Condor’s infrastructure and operational capacity than was previously known. Among the substantive new revelations:

§ Argentina—not Pinochet’s Chile, which came up with the idea of a Murder Inc. in the Southern Cone—was designated Condor 1. Declassified CIA records make it clear that the numerical call signs for member nations were alphabetical: Argentina was Condor 1; Bolivia, Condor 2; Chile, Condor 3; Paraguay, Condor 4; Uruguay, Condor 5; etc. These designations were used in encrypted communications among the Condor nations.

§ Argentina hosted the operational headquarters for a special Condor program code-named Teseo—Spanish for Theseus, the mythical Greek king who slew the fearsome Minotaur and other foes of the social order—whose mission was “to liquidate selected individuals” abroad. Secret CIA cables describe Teseo as “a unit established by the Condor cooperative organization of South American intelligence services to conduct physical attacks against subversive targets,” first in Paris and then in other European cities.

§ In September 1976, the Condor nations signed an agreement, titled “Teseo Regulation, Operations Center,” to ratify their cooperation in planning, financing, logistics, communications, and “selection of targets.” The CIA obtained a copy of the accord, which describes, in banal detail, how each intelligence service

“For decades, both the CIA and FBI kept us in the dark about what they knew and when they knew it.”

—John Dinges, author of *The Condor Years*



Robert Scherrer, the lead FBI investigator on the Letelier assassination, gathered intelligence suggesting the killing was part of a mission led by Pinochet’s secret police.

Peter Kornbluh is the author of The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability.

would contribute to the international assassination program. The operations center would be staffed by “permanent representatives from each participating service.” Their daily work schedule would run from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM and from 2:30 PM to 7:30 PM. Each country would make a contribution of \$10,000 for operational expenses, with monthly dues of \$200 paid “prior to the 30th of each month.” Assassination teams dispatched to Europe would be made up of four individuals, “with a female eventually being included”—presumably to help provide cover for the mission. “Operational costs abroad are estimated at \$3,500 per person for ten days,” the agreement stated, “with an additional \$1,000 the first time out for clothing allowance.” Under the key section titled “Execution of the Target,” the accord stated that the operational teams would “(A) Intercept the Target, (B) Carry out the operation, and (C) Escape.”

§ CIA officials viewed these Condor murder plots as a potential scandal for the agency and proactively moved to thwart them in Europe. “The plans of these countries to undertake offensive action outside of their own jurisdictions poses new problems for the Agency,” wrote Ray Warren, the head of the Latin America division, sounding the alarm to the CIA’s acting deputy director in late July 1976. “Every precaution must be taken to ensure that the Agency is not wrongfully accused of being party to this type of activity.”

A month later, Warren again warned his superiors of the “adverse political ramifications for the Agency should ‘Condor’ engage in assassinations and other flagrant violations of human rights.” But he also reported on the “action” that CIA agents were taking to “preempt” those ramifications “should the ‘Condor’ countries proceed with the European aspect of their plans.” That section of Warren’s memorandum is still redacted. But another declassified document based on Warren’s memo and other CIA records—a top-secret sensitive Senate report on Condor researched and written by Senate legal counsel Michael J. Glennon—was released unredacted. “The CIA warned the governments of the countries in which the assassinations were likely to occur—France and Portugal—which in turn warned possible targets,” states that uncensored report. “The plot was foiled.”

As revealed in these records, the CIA’s ability to countermand Condor’s murderous missions in Europe renews questions about its failure to detect and deter a similar mission in downtown Washington—the September 1976 car bombing that took the lives of Letelier and Moffitt. Until now, “Operation Condor has been somewhat of a deadly mystery,” says investigative journalist John Dinges, who is using the declassified records to revise his pioneering book *The Condor Years*. “For decades, both the CIA and FBI kept us in the dark about what they knew and when they knew it.” But with the newly released documents, “that central question can be answered, and it’s embarrassing for the US government,” Dinges concludes. “There was an intimate liaison with Condor officials and ample early intelligence of Condor plans that could have prevented the assassination in Washington.”

“In a number of cases, these documents will provide families with the only evidence they ever had on the fate of their loved ones.”

—Carlos Osorio,
senior analyst at the
National Security
Archive



Trump and Macri have long-standing personal ties. Decades ago, they bar-hopped together while their fathers negotiated real estate deals in New York City.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF DECLASSIFICATION

LIKE SO MANY RECORDS IN THE ARGENTINA DECLASSIFICATION Project, the Condor papers provide names, dates, meeting places, and vivid descriptions of the clandestine programs undertaken by the intelligence and security services of the Southern Cone. This trove of new evidence will assist human rights investigators in the former Condor countries who are continuing to pursue the state-sponsored crimes of terrorism committed during the era of military rule.

Indeed, since the documents were released in April, teams of Argentine officials have been assessing them for their evidentiary value in human rights prosecutions. In mid-September, according to Argentine Embassy officials, the country’s justice ministry transmitted a set of inquiries and requests for clarification to Washington. US officials who worked on the declassification project are currently addressing those questions.

The documents are “already contributing to ongoing cases that are both in the investigative and trial phases,” according to a statement from the Office of the Public Prosecutor in Argentina provided to *The Nation*. They have revealed “new data on how institutions [of repression] functioned under the dictatorship” as well as “data on the responsibility of officials who participated in massive human rights violations.”

Human rights organizations, as well as the families of victims for whom the documents can provide a sad but poignant closure, are also reviewing these materials. Much of Argentina’s archives of repression has been disappeared—burned, buried, or perhaps thrown into the ocean—as were so many victims. “In a number of cases,” as Carlos Osorio told the audience at the April 12 release of the records, “these documents will provide those families with the only evidence they have ever had on the fate of their loved ones.”

The family members of Héctor Hidalgo Solá are among those reviewing the records. “The declassification process and results have been an emotional journey,” affirmed Azul Hidalgo Solá, who never had a chance to know her grandfather. But “the documents have helped me construct a full narrative of my family’s history.” ■



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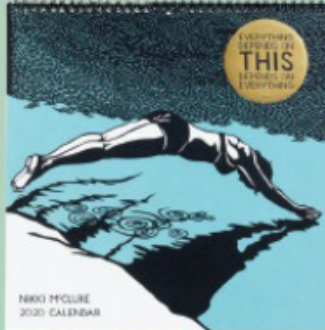
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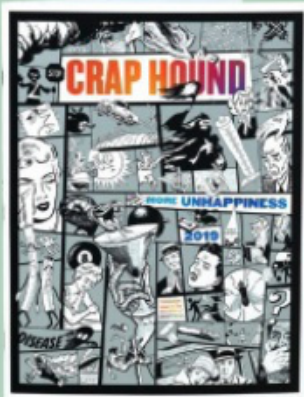
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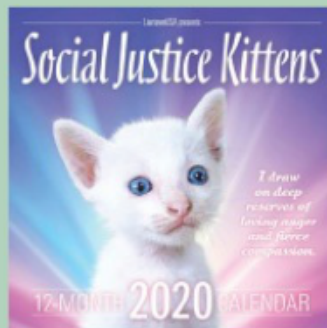
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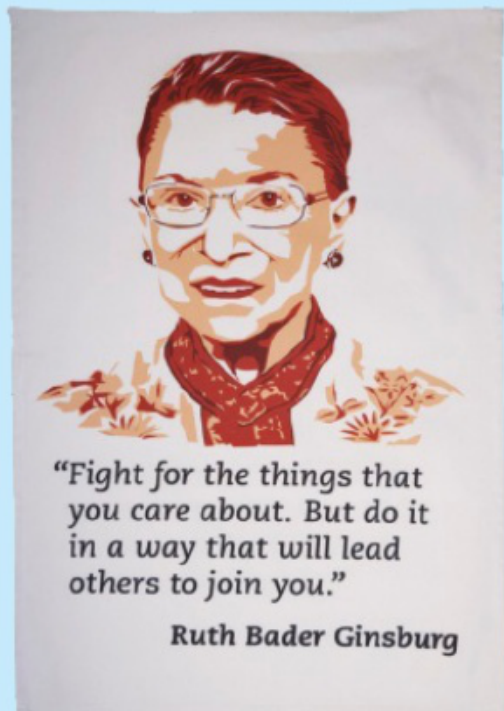
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on items collected at various points in the production and sale process. Economists typically consider VATs regressive because lower-income households spend a greater share of their income on consumer goods.

Yang's second set of taxes would be far more progressive. His administration would kill the cap on income subject to the Social Security tax, implement a financial transaction tax, and end the favorable tax treatment of capital gains.

This year's most discussed proposal for taxing the rich—an annual wealth tax—leaves Yang skeptical. In practice, he told CNBC's Harwood, a wealth tax would have “massive” implementation and compliance problems.

Amy KLOBUCHAR

The Klobuchar campaign has chosen a slogan—“Leading from the heartland”—that emphasizes down-home Midwestern political values. She promises to “pursue economic justice and shared prosperity” and begins her online biography by proudly noting her status as “the granddaughter of an iron ore miner.”

That iron ore miner probably supported Floyd Olson, the Depression-era Minnesota governor who at one point stood on the state Capitol's steps and vowed to round up those who “happen to possess considerable wealth” but weren't helping to fund relief for the state's most desperate.

You won't find many echoes of that militancy in anything that Klobuchar is proposing. Her platform stresses “ensuring all families have a fair shot in today's economy” through “investing in quality child care, overhauling our country's housing policy, raising the minimum wage, providing paid family leave, supporting small business owners and entrepreneurs, as well as helping Americans save for retirement.”

Klobuchar describes herself as enthusiastically pro-union and willing to take on “monopoly power.” Her administration, she adds in her 100 Days Plan, would move quickly to equalize tax rates for capital gains and ordinary income,

ensure that incomes over \$1 million face a minimum 30 percent tax, and close the carried interest loophole that lets fund managers sidestep billions of dollars in taxes.

A quarter century ago, New York University economist Edward Wolff pitched Bill Bradley, then a Democratic senator from New Jersey with presidential ambitions and a reputation for bold thinking, on a wealth tax. Households with over \$1 million in net worth, under Wolff's plan, would face a 0.3 percent annual levy on their assets.

Bradley seemed enthusiastic about the idea at first, Wolff told *The New Yorker* early this year, but later walked away from it. The senator thought that a wealth tax would be politically dangerous, calling it “dynamite.”

Today, a generation later, two of the top three Democratic presidential contenders are seeking a wealth tax 20 times as aggressive as the plan Bradley considered too toxic.

Even more remarkable: Most of the other Democratic candidates are backing at least a significant part of the inequality-fighting agenda that Sanders and Warren share. The rich, it seems, may have finally lost their political immunity. ■



Amy Klobuchar defines herself as enthusiastically pro-union and willing to take on “monopoly power.”

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Books & the Arts



VEXED AND TROUBLED ENGLISHMEN

How should we remember the Puritans?

by **ANDREW DELBANCO**

When the word “Puritan” entered the English language almost 500 years ago, it came as an insult—a “soul-killing Nick-name,” as one of the insulted called it. One of the name-callers, a conforming clergyman exasperated by demands to purify the Anglican Church of all vestiges of Roman Catholicism, replied to his implacable critics, “We call you Puritans not because you are purer

than other men...but because you think yourselves to be purer.”

In one variation or another, the charge has been repeated ever since. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne portrayed his Puritan ancestors as “stern and black-browed” members of “the most intolerant brood that ever lived.” The narrator of George Santayana’s 1935 novel *The Last Puritan* accused them of sharing with “the Bolshies” a “scorn of all compromises, practical or theoretical.” Just a few months ago, Maureen Dowd devoted a *New York Times* column to denouncing the left flank of the Democratic Party for keeping the spirit of “the Massachusetts Bay Colony... alive and well on the Potomac and Twit-

ter,” thereby raising the risk of a second term for Donald Trump. These “modern Puritans,” she wrote, “eviscerate their natural allies for not being pure enough.”

No nation or culture has had a monopoly on this phenomenon: the hyper-orthodox who recoil not only from the profane world but also from anyone who fails to share their revulsion. Nevertheless, serious historians have detected something peculiarly American in the type—beginning with the breakaway faction of Puritans who gave up on England in the fourth decade of the 17th century and emigrated to America, where, it is alleged, they aimed to prove their incorruptibility by serving as “a light unto the

Andrew Delbanco’s most recent book, The War Before the War: Fugitive Slaves and the Struggle for America’s Soul From the Revolution to the Civil War, has just been published in paperback.

nations” (Isaiah 42:6). And so began, some have argued, the insidious presumption that America stands alone, like ancient Israel, in covenant with God.

Today, college students are often introduced to this idea—sometimes called American exceptionalism—through “A Model of Christian Charity,” a speech by John Winthrop, a devout Christian of Puritan temperament who became the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Borrowing an image from the King James version of Matthew 5:14 (“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid”) that was itself an echo of Isaiah 42:6, the speech contained the famous claim that “we shall be as a city upon a hill; the eyes of all people are upon us,” and it has become the prime exhibit for prosecuting the case against those first New Englanders. In the words of Daniel T. Rodgers, a distinguished professor emeritus of history at Princeton University who in his new book, *As a City on a Hill*, recounts the history of this argument in order to dispute it, the Puritans have been blamed for injecting “a sense of God’s chosenness into the distinctive cultural DNA of imperially expansive America.”

Rodgers’s book is not only a close reading of the reception and history of Winthrop’s speech but also a rescue operation for Puritanism itself. Rather than instigating the pernicious idea of the United States as God’s most favored nation, the Puritans, he argues, were unsure of their worthiness and subjected themselves to “the moral scrutiny of the world.”

To begin with, Rodgers shows that almost everything we thought we knew about Winthrop’s speech is wrong. Ever since a copyist (it’s unclear when) scrawled “Written on board the Arrabella on the Atlantick Ocean” on a cover sheet attached to the surviving manuscript, Winthrop has been imagined as raising his voice into the roaring wind on the roiling sea. But in fact, he was more likely to have delivered the speech—often called a lay sermon because he was not an ordained minister—in Southampton before embarking. Or he may never have delivered it at all.

For more than 200 years the work lay in manuscript, until the Massachusetts Historical Society published it in 1838, in a collection of documents in which it was preceded by a few poems just a cut above doggerel and followed by a short history of the US Postal Service. Throughout the 19th century, the speech remained little more than an antiquarian curiosity. Even in the early 20th century, when scholars began to take

As a City on a Hill

The Story of America’s Most Famous Lay Sermon

By Daniel T. Rodgers

Princeton University Press. 368 pp. \$29.95

note of it, no one attributed to it any claim of divine special favor. Writing in 1916, the Harvard historian Samuel Eliot Morison, who traced his New England ancestry to the 1660s, heard in it an “emphasis on collectivism rather than individualism”—as if Winthrop had been a secret socialist.

The modern career of Winthrop’s speech got underway in the 1930s, when a graduate student at the University of Chicago, Perry Miller, went east to Harvard, in part to study with Morison. Miller, who also had New England roots (he was related to Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy) but cultivated the personal style of a Midwestern tough guy in the Dreiser-Hemingway mode, had dropped out of college for a while and joined the merchant marine, which took him, among other places, to the west coast of Africa. It was there, he later recalled in brash emulation of Edward Gibbon—who had been seized by the ambition to write *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* while contemplating the ruins of the Forum—that Miller discovered his destiny while unloading drums of American oil. Suddenly, he grasped his life’s mission: to expound to the world “what I took to be the innermost propulsion of the United States.” This propulsion, Miller insisted, had been ignited in colonial New England.

In two magisterial volumes composed in the 1930s and ’40s—*The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* and *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*—Miller ranged over a vast number of tracts and sermons from both old and New England and assembled them into a brilliant portrait of the Puritans, as Rodgers puts it, “in an existentialist key.” For Miller, “dread...lay at the heart of the Puritan experiment,” by which he meant not primarily dread of the wilderness or America’s native “heathen” inhabitants but dread of themselves. At the core of the Puritan church, in his view, were not the sacraments of baptism or Communion (though he chronicled the furious disputes that arose over qualifications for these rites) but the copious sermons whose central subject was the ubiquitous sin of pride.

The essential task of the Puritan minister was to destroy the presumption that any human being had the slightest merit in the eyes of God. But Puritanism also offered consolation. It taught that the more unwor-

thy one feels before God, the more ground there is for hope. This was the preacher’s paradoxical work: to castigate his flock without mercy (“the minister,” as one thundering preacher put it, “will discover the lusts, and deceits, and corruptions, that you could not find out”) until, stripped of the belief in their essential worth, penitent listeners would throw themselves upon God’s mercy. According to one English minister who did not emigrate to America but mentored several leaders of the emigration, “None are fitter for comfort than those that think themselves furthest off.”

These were among the themes of Miller’s demanding two-volume study of the “New England mind.” But the work for which he remains best known was a kind of coda—a short essay published in 1953 whose title, “Errand Into the Wilderness,” he borrowed from an Election Day sermon delivered in 1670 by the Puritan minister Samuel Danforth. In that essay, Miller focused on “A Model of Christian Charity,” arguing that Winthrop’s little flotilla, which sailed from Southampton to Salem, Massachusetts, in April 1630, was a “task force” launched for the purpose of working “out that complete reformation which was not yet accomplished in England and Europe, but which would quickly be accomplished if only the saints back there had a working model to guide them.”

Winthrop and his comrades, Miller contended, departed the Old World not to abandon it but to save it. They wanted to build in New England a model of what old England should be. They fled the Anglican crackdown on religious dissent (several ministers who joined the exodus had been threatened with defrocking or worse) and sought safety in America in order to erect a true church. What they had in mind was not an ecclesiastical establishment like the Church of England, with authority exerted downward from king and bishops. Instead they envisioned independent communities of gathered believers, each with authority vested in itself and served by a pastoral and preaching ministry—what became known as Congregationalism.

Miller was a prodigious scholar, but he could be carried away by his metaphorical imagination. He told a dramatic—even melodramatic—tale of self-exiles bewildered as the world they left behind changed beyond recognition. In the 1630s and ’40s, while New Englanders built their godly commonwealth, their Puritan comrades in old England were fomenting not only church reform but also a political and social

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revolution, including what Michael Walzer, in *The Revolution of the Saints* (1965), called “the whole apparatus of radical politics: the illegal press, organized book smuggling, a rough underground network.” They defied the bishops and worked to restore power to Parliament after its dissolution by Charles I, to depose and ultimately execute the king, and under Oliver Cromwell to establish a regime with a degree of religious pluralism that shocked their brethren abroad.

Watching from afar, Miller’s Puritans were forced to confront their obsolescence. The guiding example of their city on a hill was no longer needed. Miller, who served in Britain during World War II with the Office of Strategic Services, compared them to a platoon of soldiers sent on a reconnaissance mission who, by the time they get back, find that “the situation at headquarters [is] entirely changed” and their mission has been forgotten. To amplify his point, Miller added a theatrical trope to his military metaphor. The emigrant Puritans were like an actor who, having prepared for “the leading role in the greatest dramatic spectacle of the century,” stepped onto the stage “only to find the theatre empty, no spotlight working, and himself entirely alone.” “Having failed to rivet the eyes of the world upon their city on the hill,” Miller concluded, “they were left alone with America.”

Miller’s prose was heartfelt and arresting, so much so that many students and readers who went on to teach or write about early America had their impression of Puritanism shaped by him. But Rodgers also notes the oversights and exaggerations in his rendition of the Puritan errand. For one thing, Winthrop said nothing in “A Model of Christian Charity” about transforming England but spoke only of “succeeding plantations”—that is, future colonies—about which he hoped “that men shall say...the Lord make it like that of Massachusetts.” Rodgers also makes the telling point that Miller used the word “model” in the modern sense of a small precedent to be replicated on a larger scale, but in the 17th century it could also mean something closer to what we would call an analysis or anatomy, “a condensation,” Rodgers writes, “the marrow and principle of the thing being outlined.”

Moreover, Miller missed the force of the crucial words that Winthrop wrote immediately after “we shall be as a city upon a hill; the eyes of all people are upon us”: “So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this

work we have undertaken and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword through the world.” These words—which express the existential anxiety that Miller did so much to illuminate in his earlier work—attest to Winthrop’s craving fame less than he feared notoriety.

Nonetheless, when the time came for resistance and revision, as always happens when a new generation of scholars succeeds the last, Miller’s version of the Puritans was not tamped down but ratcheted up. Another gifted scholar, Sacvan Bercovitch, born in Canada to (in his words) “Yiddishist left-wing” immigrant parents, was astonished upon his emigration to the United States to discover the persistence of the myth of America as God’s darling nation. Beginning in 1975 with *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*—which took as its proof text Cotton Mather’s *Nehemias Americanus, the Life of John Winthrop* (1702)—Bercovitch, who eventually succeeded to Miller’s professorial chair, argued that his predecessor had not gone far enough. Puritans did not merely see themselves as taking incremental steps toward reforming international Protestantism; they saw themselves appointed by God to prepare the “scene of Christ’s triumphant descent to His New Jerusalem.” They imagined New England as no less than the site of the Second Coming, from which truth would radiate throughout the world, as prophesied in the Book of Revelation. These were not Miller’s Puritans beset by self-doubt. Bercovitch’s Puritans were convinced, with terrifying certainty, of their divine charge to lead what he called “the last stage of the worldwide work of redemption.” Their hallmark was not dread but an overweening confidence in the sanctity of their mission. They saw themselves as legatees of the divine mandate granted to ancient Israel.

Writing in the shadow of another war—the United States’ monstrous misadventure in Vietnam—Bercovitch went so far as to claim that the Puritans had “used the biblical myth of exodus and conquest to justify imperialism before the fact.” In this reading, Winthrop’s speech becomes the ur-text for a kind of collective narcissism that runs through American life: the brazen conviction that the American way is the only way. By implication, the Puritans were retroactively responsible for the predations committed in the name of manifest destiny, for the folly of trying to remake Europe in America’s image after World War I, for the fanatic hatred of godless communism, and for the catastrophic intervention in Vietnam.

By the turn of the 21st century, after the tragic sequence of 9/11 and the Iraq War, this way of telling American history had become so habitual among some scholars that when a Harvard undergraduate, Pete Buttigieg (who studied with Bercovitch), wrote in his 2004 senior thesis that “the very founding of America was an act of international intervention...which would recur in later years with America’s exportation of its democratic creed,” he was repeating an academic dogma.

Rodgers insists that neither Miller’s version of the Puritans attempting to save the Old World by example nor Bercovitch’s version as the self-appointed vanguard in the cosmic drama of salvation gets Winthrop and his contemporaries right. In this judgment, Rodgers is not alone. In a sweeping new history of what he calls “the city-state of Boston,” Yale historian Mark Peterson laments that “these interpretations badly distort the meaning and influence of the governor’s words,” and Michael P. Winship, in a valuable new history of Puritanism, *Hot Protestants*, observes that the idea that the “puritans envisioned New England as the site of the millennium’s New Jerusalem” has “been thoroughly discredited.” And so the pendulum swings. The Puritans seem to be coming back into view not as progenitors of some future America but as they appeared to themselves in their own time, what the mid-20th-century historian Carl Bridenbaugh called “vexed and troubled Englishmen.”

In taking the turn to a more historicist approach, it makes sense, as Rodgers does, to stick with Winthrop as the Puritans’ representative man. Before emigrating to America, Winthrop struggled to negotiate the accelerating transformation of England from a relatively static feudal order to a dynamic and disruptive—morally as well as socially—market economy. A member of the landed gentry, he feared that England was becoming a place where “no man’s estate almost will suffice to keep sail with his equals, and he who fails herein must live in scorn and contempt; hence it comes that all arts and trades are carried in that deceitful and unrighteous course, as it is almost impossible for a good and upright man to maintain his charge and live comfortably in any of them.” In short, it was becoming harder for men of Winthrop’s rank to be both virtuous and prosperous.

“The aim of the great landowner,” as R.H. Tawney wrote in his still valuable *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926), “was no longer to hold at his call an army of retainers, but to exploit his estates as a judicious

investment.” Winthrop was not quite a great landowner, though he owned enough to have commissioned a portrait of himself in ruffled collar and white gloves. But when Suffolk, his home county in England, was struck in the 1620s by an economic downturn and revenue from his land holdings declined, he felt compelled to accept an appointment as an attorney to the Court of Wards in London in order to supplement his income. This work was rife with opportunities for corruption. Bribery and favor trading were rampant, and it was common practice for the court to sell wardships on behalf of the king to bidders intent on extracting value by carrying off timber and crops, allowing buildings to rot, and thus leaving the ward, when he came of age, with a depleted inheritance.

Meanwhile, Winthrop’s real estate holdings in Suffolk forced upon him vexing questions. Should he raise rents on subsistence farmers who had long resided on his property at nominal fees? Should he prohibit scavenging? Should he enclose his lands with hedges for the purpose of raising sheep, thus driving his tenants into the swelling ranks of vagabonds or what we would call the homeless? As the great historian Christopher Hill wrote, this was a time when large landowners “had no inhibitions...about evicting whole villages to make room for sheep” in order to profit from the growing wool export trade.

Winthrop never shed his inhibitions. He may have fled England in part because he feared becoming one of the losers in the new economy, but he also feared becoming one of the morally compromised winners. As Rodgers aptly puts it, Winthrop’s flight from old to New England is best understood not only as “an ocean passage but a passage from self to others.” His “Model of Christian Charity” was filled with yearning for a lost—no doubt largely imaginary—world where poor and rich treated each other with reciprocal loyalty.

Winthrop was certainly no radical egalitarian of the sort found in Hill’s revelatory book *The World Turned Upside Down*, about the Levellers and Ranters who dreamed during the English Civil War of expanded suffrage, the redistribution of wealth, and limits on the size of property that any landowner could possess. But neither was he insouciant about the plight of the poor, however much he believed, as he wrote in the opening lines of “Model,” that God

“hath so disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor.” These words have often been read as an ominous overture to the long history of Americans justifying the extremes of poverty and wealth as consistent with natural law. But as Rodgers shows, this is a bad caricature. Rather, Winthrop hoped that in the New World, God would touch the hearts of those empowered like himself “so that the rich and mighty should not eat up the poor.” One of the most significant passages in “A Model of Christian Charity” is his discussion concerning the repayment of loans.

If the debtor “have nothing to pay,” he said, citing Deuteronomy 15:2, then “thee must forgive him.”

Rodgers gives a subtle account of how the memories of destitute people in old England—“wandering ghosts in the shape of men,” as Winthrop called them—haunted not only Winthrop but

also other magistrates and ministers in New England, where harsh measures such as whipping vagrants were implemented alongside the “abatement of taxes for poorer town residents” and grants of grain or firewood to families in distress. “Grudging as it often was,” Rodgers writes, “public, tax-supported responsibility for the poor” was “a fixture of New England town life.” “By 1700,” he points out, “Boston was spending perhaps a quarter of its budget on poor relief.” At the center of *As a City on a Hill* is the insight that Winthrop and his fellow Puritans believed that “market price and ordinary market relations would not suffice for a moral community.”

In later chapters, Rodgers tells the story of how “‘A Model of Christian Charity’ was plucked out of Winthrop’s context” by politicians, pundits, and even some historians and “reimagined as something quite different—as a founding document for the nation itself.” In the process, “the moral question Winthrop had placed at the core of his text would no longer be the part of the Model that mattered.” Winthrop and his fellow Puritans were turned into prophets of nationalism and unfettered capitalism, and “the aching tension,” as Rodgers calls it, “between the social fact of inequality and Winthrop’s yearnings for a community rooted in love” was all but lost.

Disputes concerning the meaning of the past are, of course, indices to conflicts over the present and divergent hopes for the

future. Such a dispute took place some 40 years ago—though it is not usually thought of as a debate about Puritanism and its legacy—between two American presidents. In July 1979, in what became known as the “malaise” speech (although he never used that word), Jimmy Carter spoke of a “spiritual crisis” in the United States and called for a renewal of Americans’ “faith in each other.” In preparing his speech, he was counseled by, among others, Christopher Lasch, who was steeped in the history of the Puritans and especially valued their vision of a society in which, Winthrop wrote, “we must...make others conditions our own” and “must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities for the supply of others necessities.” Winthrop asked his fellow emigrants to keep their “eyes [on] our commission and community,” and using the language of 1 Corinthians, he beseeched them to conceive of themselves “as members of the same body.” Although Carter made no direct reference to “A Model of Christian Charity,” his admonishing speech, now notorious for its political miscalculation, was filled with echoes of Winthrop’s call for charity and self-restraint.

Carter’s recapitulation of Puritan social and ethical ideals proved unpersuasive. Sixteen months later, Ronald Reagan defeated him for the presidency and set out to dismantle a half century of public policy from the New Deal to the Great Society designed—however meager those efforts may seem now—to mitigate the inequities of American society. Reagan, too, appropriated the Puritans. For him, they were laissez-faire capitalists in the making, prophets of a free market utopia. Over the next eight years, on at least 30 occasions, he echoed Winthrop’s speech (to which he liked to add the word “shining” as a flourish before the scriptural phrase “city on a hill”). Reagan’s shining city bore little resemblance to Carter’s anxious nation. It was a triumphant image of American power, prosperity, and eminence, a “movie-set city,” as Rodgers describes it, with nothing in it of Winthrop’s clarion warning that God is affronted when putative believers “shutteth our ears from hearing the cry of the poor” (Proverbs 21:13) or “worship other Gods, our pleasures, and profits.”

Every generation imagines its own version of the Puritans’ errand. The one Rodgers invokes—a social experiment conducted with an “acute sense of the conditionality of God’s promises” and “more open to self-criticism, even to a certain humility, than most in history’s annals”—is a salutary one for our dark time. ■





THE REST IS UP TO US

Ted Chiang's science fiction helps us look past the power of technology

by **STEPHEN KEARSE**

One of the frustrations of science fiction becoming the bedrock of popular culture is that we've primarily adopted the genre's aesthetics. From the sleek Afrofuturism of *Black Panther's* Bugatti spaceships to the gleaming cityscapes of *Blade Runner 2049*, much of today's sci-fi emphasizes kick-ass design. Even the problems of these fictional worlds are stylish: the dangerously sexy AI of *Love, Death & Robots*, the variegated aliens of *Saga*, the slick technologies of *Black Mirror*. Even allowing that a number of these works are excellent, there's a clear bent for sightseeing over storytelling, mood over meaning and intellectual provocation. Contemporary sci-fi is a vibe.

Science fiction author Ted Chiang has long been one of the genre's holdouts: He is interested in more than landscaping and

interior decoration. His stories brim with wonder and horror, spectacle and mundanity, philosophy and religion. Tapping into a range of speculative traditions, from pulp and fantasy to the rigorous scientific accuracy of hard sci-fi and the popcorn thrills of soft sci-fi, his work has a profound richness. On both a conceptual and a narrative level, the technology and scientific inquiries that animate his stories never function as props or pretexts. Chiang's science fiction is fundamentally social, every character and object deeply intertwined in history and in future possibility. His narratives trace the consequences of these social relations, networks, and webs expanding, collapsing, and evolving.

Exhalation, his second and latest collection of short stories, comes on the heels of 2016's *Arrival*, a film adaptation of his 1998 novella, *Story of Your Life*. A winner of the Nebula Award, the story centers on a linguist who learns an alien language that allows her to view time nonlinearly. From this new per-

spective, she discovers that she will one day have a daughter who will die from a terminal illness; the rest of the story explores how the linguist lives with a tragedy she has yet to experience and the choices she has yet to make. Like its film adaptation, *Story of Your Life* showed Chiang's knack for melding the personal, the wondrous, and the epistemological. *Exhalation* continues that tradition.

Composed of pieces from the past two decades and two new stories, *Exhalation* demonstrates Chiang's commitment to form as well as ideation. Across the collection he finds shrewd ways to meld perspective and setting, using prayers, museum plaques, and journal entries to channel character voices and outline his peculiar worlds. Based in Washington state, he balances his fiction writing with his work as a freelance technical writer in the software industry. He's been active for about three decades, but there was a 17-year gap between his first collection, *Stories of Your Life and Others*, and this latest one. While he attributes this sparse output to the grind of writing—"Writing is very difficult for me, and so I write very slowly," he once said—each entry in his catalog feels like a thought experiment that's been thoroughly considered and tested. In *Exhalation*, Chiang gives us storytelling as a kind of terraforming: He builds worlds and makes them inhabitable, for their characters, for their readers, and for their ideas.

Exhalation follows scientists, con artists, merchants, software designers, and even parrots across time, space, and dimensions. This impressive range and Chiang's visible respect for his characters' differences have led him to be characterized by some critics as a humanist, but that term fails to capture the ambition on display here. The collection's title story, for instance, takes place in a universe where metallic beings powered by mechanical lungs learn that the planet they live on is encased in a sealed chamber, meaning the energy that powers them is finite. They had believed that their sky, and thus breathable air, was infinite. Following the second law of thermodynamics (entropy never decreases in a closed system), this revelation portends doom: With the air pressure marching toward a fatal equilibrium between the atmosphere around them and the argon they draw from an underground reservoir that gives them life, it will eventually reach a level at which all airflow and breathing will cease. "It will be the end of pressure, the end of motive power, the end of thought," the narrator says.

Stephen Kearse is a freelance writer and critic. He has contributed to *The Baffler*, *Pitchfork*, and *The New York Times Magazine*.

Chiang stages this grave news within a moment of surreal body horror. The narrator, an anatomist, discovers the truth of his universe by dissecting himself and observing the mechanisms of his brain. Recalling that strange moment, he says, “I saw that air does not, as we had always assumed, simply provide power to the engine that realizes our thoughts. Air is in fact the very medium of our thoughts. All that we are is a pattern of air flow.” As he processes this news, he sees his mind contemplating death: “Body locked in a restraining bracket, brain suspended across my laboratory...I could see the leaves of my brain flitting faster from the tumult of my thoughts, which in turn increased my agitation at being so restrained and immobile.” The scene is lurid and disturbing and strikingly inhuman. There’s an intimacy to the image of self-dissection, too, but it’s so foreign, so welded to the narrator’s particular anatomy and circumstances, that it resists becoming a human parable. This isn’t a story about peak oil or climate change; it’s about an irreversible catastrophe as experienced by a wholly alien life-form.

This focus on foreign bodies and untranslatable conflicts allows Chiang to keep the story firmly within the grip of the narrator, who, despite the collective panic caused by his revelation, embraces his fate and turns toward the sublime. “The universe began as an enormous breath being held,” the narrator says after its peers struggle to halt the coming equilibrium. “Who knows why, but whatever the reason, I am glad that it did, because I owe my existence to that fact. All my desires and ruminations are no more and no less than eddy currents generated by the gradual exhalation of our universe. And until this great exhalation is finished, my thoughts live on.” In Chiang’s hands, an imminent extinction becomes an opportunity for reflection. This is why humanism fails to fully capture his ambitions. He isn’t simply affirming life’s value; he’s probing its specific resonance, exploring how the nature and value of existence—for both the human and the nonhuman—arise through particular experiences, even the specter of death.

The relationship between character and context is equally important in “The Merchant and the Alchemist’s Gate,” a time-travel story set in medieval Baghdad. The narrator is a Muslim merchant who learns that the course of human life is fixed and predetermined. The time-travel device that he encounters—a doorway—allows the future and the past to be visited but not changed. Through that

Exhalation

Stories

By Ted Chiang

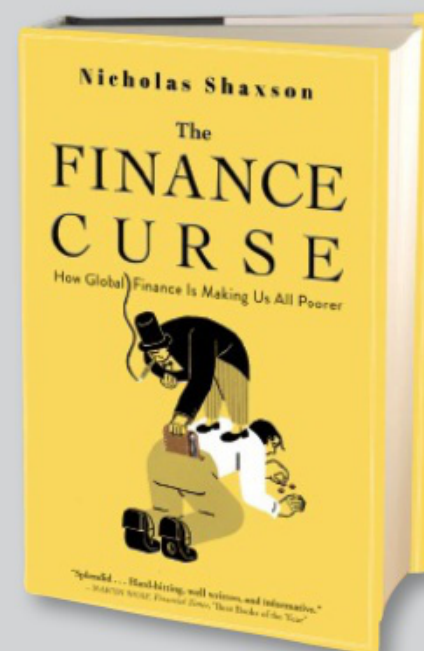
Knopf. 368 pp. \$25.95

permanence, Chiang weaves three stories within stories, in the vein of *One Thousand and One Nights*, into a knot of loss and acceptance. Time-travel stories are often built on the allure of defying destiny—preventing a death, saving a lost friendship, saying goodbye—and derive their tension from the risk of failure or the unforeseen consequences of success. Fate flouts the plans of every character in “The Merchant,” but none of them are losers. They emerge from different time frames with greater comprehension of their lives and less anxiety about the future. “Nothing erases the past,” the merchant concludes. “There is repentance, there is atonement, and there is forgiveness. That is all, but that is enough.”

As a matter of abstract principle, this is a grim moral. But again, Chiang is interested in the possible social function of time travel, how it shapes travelers’ sense of community and purpose. It’s noteworthy that the merchant offers this wisdom in retrospect, telling his story to a caliph. His journey has made him more pious and more capable of dealing with the loss of his wife, whom he entered the past to save. He frames his epiphany as a parable, but it’s really a recounting of how his belief in Allah was renewed after tragedy. His story is a public declaration of faith, a lesson for others in doubt.

Chiang’s attention to setting extends to nature as well. “The Great Silence” is an elliptical story from the perspective of a Puerto Rican parrot. Speaking with resignation, the parrot reflects on the irony of humans searching for extraterrestrial life when there are species on Earth whose intelligence they neglect: “We’re a nonhuman species capable of communicating with them. Aren’t we exactly what humans are looking for?” In the tone of a personal essay, Chiang juxtaposes the bird’s longing with the history of the Fermi paradox, reportedly proposed by the Italian American physicist Enrico Fermi, who wondered why we have thus far seen no evidence of extraterrestrial civilizations in our galaxy despite the high mathematical probability that they exist. The Arecibo telescope, a radio instrument in Puerto Rico, listens for alien signals but has never been known to detect any, hence the story’s title. From the parrot’s perspective, it is humans who are poor at communicating, not the universe. (It’s further damning that the Arecibo Observatory is only a few kilo-

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meters from Bosque Estatal de Río Abajo, the parrot's native home, and that the birds are endangered.)

The topic and framing are unique, but the crux of the story is its narrator's voice. The bird feels a blatant abandonment that borders on jealousy. "Parrots are vocal learners: we can learn to make new sounds after we've heard them," it says. "It's an ability that few animals possess. A dog may understand dozens of commands, but it will never do anything but bark." For Chiang, human arrogance is complicit in the parrots' loneliness. He imagines them as not just ignored but unrequited, which makes the parrot's final lines—"You be good. I love you"—sting.

Communicating across the void is also the subject of "Omphalos," the story of a Christian archaeologist, Dorothea, whose worldview is challenged by an astronomy paper. Framed around a series of private prayers to her god and a single letter, the story uses the epistolary format to explore Dorothea's deepest beliefs. She views the world with intense religiosity and deep empiricism, a perspective that is reinforced by the scientific norms of her time. Even though the story takes place in an age with e-mail and air travel, the science of Dorothea's world is creationist. Distinct fields like geology and physics and tools like carbon dating have not been developed as we know them to be. Science has remained yoked to religion. Chiang describes Dorothea as a natural philosopher, a term that is archaic in our time because science and religion are now discrete but one that still resonates in her world. (She works for Boston's Museum of Natural Philosophy.) Chiang emphasizes that the science of this world is not wrong per se—Dorothea is a rigorous thinker and knowledgeable about biology as well as archaeology. She practices the scientific method. The difference is that the fundamental assumptions of her world's science have yet to be proved false. All knowledge, Chiang reminds us, is premised on an underlying set of suppositions.

Dorothea is forced to confront her views when an astronomy paper is peer-reviewed for publication in an academic journal titled *Natural Philosophy*. The manuscript in question is not an empirical breakthrough or discovery. Rather, it's a standard theoretical paper that reinterprets existing data to propose a new paradigm—specifically, a creationist account of a planet at the center of the universe. "[Although] there's no way to detect life on that planet," the peer reviewer tells Dorothea, "[the paper's author] suggests that the planet is inhabited, and that its inhabitants are the reason God created

the universe." Upon learning of the paper, Dorothea doesn't pray for two months and leaves her post at an archaeological site.

A creationist archaeologist digging into the earth for truths being bested by a creationist astronomer looking up at space and being just as off base is a hilarious conceit. But the story is no send-up; Chiang is more interested in the experience of truth rather than its facticity. He uses the story to explore how Dorothea restores her commitment to science when that pursuit is no longer religious and her fundamental beliefs have been tested. Now we meet a different Dorothea, one open to the uncertainty if not satisfied by it. "Even if humanity is not the reason for which the universe was made," she prays, "I still wish to understand the way it operates. We human beings may not be the answer to the question *why*, but I will keep looking for the answer to *how*."

It's tempting to ascribe a sentimental bent to Chiang's work. Many of these stories end on notes of resilience or transformation that, taken together, imbue his characters with a kind of nobility. When asked recently in an interview in *Electric Lit* whether that hopefulness is intentional, Chiang offered a conflicted answer: "I've seen—both from a distance and up close—how often people's behavior is rooted in malice or hypocrisy, so it's fair to say that I'm a cynic now. (They say no one is more cynical than a disillusioned idealist.) Many writers draw on such experiences as fuel for their fiction, but my imagination doesn't seem to work that way. It's not so much that I have to actively struggle against cynicism in my work as it is that I'm currently less interested in stories that reinforce cynicism."

That rejection of bleakness is undeniably there. But there is little determinism in his stories. When his characters face extinction or paradigm shifts, they don't do what's logical; instead, they respond in line with their beliefs and their environments. These are stories of potential rather than reaction or reflex, tales in which mysteries and conflicts are just as embedded in history, time, and place as the characters that experience them.

"Anxiety Is the Dizziness of Freedom," the collection's best work, takes this as its subject. The story follows Nat, a recovering drug addict infiltrating a therapy group to score a prism, a technology that allows communication with a parallel world by splitting a time line in half. Prisms are mass-produced but are not all equal. Each prism communicates with a different parallel world, and the one Nat is eyeing, owned by an unsuspecting

addict, offers a payoff if she can obtain it in time. The clock is ticking because once a prism's power runs out, the link to that world is closed forever. Power is drained through use, so the more data is exchanged between worlds, the more quickly the prism expires. This makes every prism fragile and potentially valuable, as there are prisms in which certain global events never happen or happen differently (but only those events that happened after the first prism in that world was activated, which varies between worlds).

Nat and her coworker Morrow conspire to procure a prism that connects to a reality in which the victim and the survivor of a deadly car crash in their world are reversed. Across worlds, they hope to use this prism to unite the survivors, who are celebrities, and receive a huge reward. The fact that their plan is built around a con and a seedy technology makes this the pulpiest and most conventional story in *Exhalation*, but it's also the wackiest and funniest. Channeling Philip K. Dick, Chiang stacks the story with trippy imagery like prism users asking themselves for dating advice and collaborating across dimensions to run scams. It's delirious and exciting as hell.

Beyond the thrills, though, the conceptual focus of "Anxiety" is how to live with excess. Nat works at SelfTalk, a company that connects prism users to themselves across time lines. A whole industry has blossomed through data exchange and analysis across worlds, and the characters in the story experience overload from all the possibility. Celebrity gossip and sports news become more engrossing because there are time lines in which the speculations and predictions prove to be true; authors compete with themselves as readers find better versions of their books. Seeking guidance, prism users contact their "paraselves," as they've been termed, and gawk as their counterparts live out the choices they didn't make or are given opportunities they didn't have. "Anxiety" is about free will in an age of *tangible* infinite possibility, and Chiang dwells on the prism as both a tool and a commodity, its value arising from trade and negotiation, work and play.

While the story ends with an act of kindness, it also leaves us with a challenge. Chiang takes technologies and scientific principles and dares us to imagine them as more than just devices to be controlled or problems to be solved. The robots do not want to kill us, and the animals are not (yet) resigned to our stupidity. Ultimately, it is each of us who makes our world. Science and technology will neither save us nor kill us. It will do what it has always done: provide us with understanding and tools. The rest is up to us. ■



WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Succession's supposed 1 percent satire

by ERIN SCHWARTZ

There's a scene in *Succession's* second season in which Logan Roy, the patriarch and CEO of the family-owned media and entertainment conglomerate Waystar Royco, sits with his sons, his great-nephew, and a longtime colleague to watch a former employee reveal a number of the company's sordid secrets on a television. The men slouch on bisque sofas, drink beer, and collectively heckle the screen as the whistle-blower, James Weisel, details decades of sexual abuse on the company's cruise lines. When a journalist asks him the meaning of the phrase "incident NRPI," which appears frequently in a set of

confidential corporate documents, Weisel responds, "No real person involved. That means it's a sex worker or a migrant worker at a foreign port, not involving a guest or a permanent member of staff."

The room goes quiet, tensing, then Logan explodes—"I can't watch any more of this fucking bullshit!"—and throws the remote at his eldest son, who changes the channel to a baseball game.

The distinction between these "NRPI" workers, whose sexual abuse can be safely disregarded because they are not considered "real," and the wealthy men forced to hear about them on TV while they eat snacks in a Manhattan penthouse exemplifies the tension at *Succession's* core. In episode after episode, the rich aren't merely oblivious to the lives of the poor; they want

the poor not to exist, to a degree that often crosses over into violence. Although the show's plot tracks the power struggles within a single rich family, *Succession* is beloved for its sardonic tone: the way it skewers its wealthy characters and the attention it pays to the barriers not only between the 1 percent and the rest of us but also between distinct phyla of the economic elite.

Succession is the invention of British TV writer Jesse Armstrong, the creator of the '00s sitcom *Peep Show* and a frequent collaborator of Armando Iannucci's. (Armstrong wrote for Iannucci's British political comedy *The Thick of It* and cowrote his Iraq War satire *In the Loop*.) The show draws from a melange of references, including the succession battles of the Murdoch family, the cartoonish nastiness of media mogul Sumner Redstone, and James B. Stewart's business reporting opus *Disney-War*. One of the show's executive producers is Adam McKay (*The Big Short*, *Vice*), who once made slapstick comedies and has since become a box office chronicler of late capitalism. It also employs a host of consultants—including former *Lou Dobbs Tonight* executive producer Jim McGinnis; Merissa Marr, a senior writer at *The Wall Street Journal*; and Derek Blasberg, a socialite and Instagram-famous fashion writer—to ensure that its depictions of wealth, power, and broadcast news are meticulously and accurately detailed.

The pleasure of watching *Succession* comes in part from the precision and authority of its portrait of the rich and in part from the schadenfreude of being shown, again and again in increasingly creative ways, how terrible and lonely they are. I find this enjoyable, as do many others. But *Succession* raises a question encapsulated by the 1930s ballad "Which Side Are You On?"—a song that closes out an episode in which Logan successfully fights off a board of directors revolt led by his son Kendall. "Oh, workers, can you stand it? / Oh, tell me how you can," Pete Seeger sings as Kendall wanders the streets of lower Manhattan, forlorn and out of a job. One wants to ask much the same of *Succession*: Which side is it on?

S*uccession* has been described as a satire of the wealthy, and that description fits its tone. The insults are biting (after Logan's son Roman insists that he has "hobbies," his sister, Shiv, shoots back, "Killing hobos isn't a hobby"), and the characters' biographies include details that seem calibrat-

Erin Schwartz is the managing editor of Study Hall. She writes frequently for *The Nation* on television, popular culture, and books.

From outside voices, please

I grew drunk on the dragonflies' ultra
 Three times I asked our misogynistic uncle, the
 family patriarch, for money for books for the girls
 to which he then scoffed drunkenly throwing coins onto
 our heads onto the floor chuckling amused at his own godlike generosity
 I learned to read via occupational hazard manuals
 I woke up from a coma believing that I was a witch with polio
 I needed you so badly I thought I would die
 I told mama about cousin wincing while he peed outside
 All of my curiosities ceased breaking down to the
 one sum the one test whether I could keep calm while I was
 drummed I was ripped off again and again and again I was
 featured in revenge porn after revenge porn after revenge
 porn I was deciding whether to reconcile with his enabler
 because in that moment I was what my friend called completely unconscious
 and incapable
 of consent As I sat along the Mississippi River in another life which is not the
 same life no it is not the same life as the one I have come to grow
 love inside like a stone birth Everybody talked and talked and talked about how
 good a rapist he was right, how good a rapist a classic glass Coca Cola bottle
 could be was, right Meanwhile hadn't heard one word about what
 saved her acutely patented life what cast out the canker out from within her
 Meanwhile
 not one word about the dark sky not one word more than
 the mean or the average or the outlier of it I admit it's actually something very hard
 to penetrate It's actually something which will engulf us all incapacitate it's not even
 the Christian right or the fossil fuels of America it's actually
 It's actually probably the only thing that the Christian right or the fossil fuels
 of America have ever been would ever truly be or have been afraid of
 I've called the minute men, they are on their way

VALERIE HSIUNG

ed to be as humiliating as possible. (At one point, Kendall brags with the naivete of a Trump son making a joke online that he was “fuckin’ king” of Harvard’s comedy magazine, the *Lampoon*, because he “kicked their distribution into shape”; Logan’s eldest son, Connor, a collector of “Napoleonica,” buys what turns out to be a fake mummified Napoleon penis for \$500,000.) The ways its characters attempt to alchemize wealth into cultural capital are so deliciously absurd that one could spend the rest of the essay listing them: Shiv’s “corn-fed” partner Tom Wambsgans gleefully recounting a sexual encounter at an exclusive Brooklyn warehouse party in which he swallowed his own ejaculate. Kendall buying an idiotic pair of multi-colored Lanvin sneakers on his way to a meeting at a fine-arts-focused start-up, then removing them halfway through his pitch to show how down-to-earth he is.

But the show does not have the plot of a satire. Both seasons pick through the wreckage of the Roy family’s betrayals, examining the inheritance of trauma and the damage caused by an emotionally domineering parent. This is where most of *Succession*’s time and emotional energy are spent. These story lines propel the show and lend themselves to comparisons with *King Lear*, but they also frequently conflict with the satirical register, which chips away at our inclination to see the Roys as sympathetic or self-aware. The calculus is tricky: For the plot to work, viewers need to care about the fate of the Roy family, believe in the truth of their relationships, and see the tragedy in their repeated failures to transcend their worst instincts. Too much hideous behavior and we can’t empathize with their pain; too little and the satire is a garnish on top of a story primarily concerned with the complex feelings of asshole businesspeople.

The way this balancing act is pulled off: Each season’s narrative structure centers on what Logan calls a “blood sacrifice.” In the first season, his name is Andrew Dodds, and in the second, she is Kira, no last name. Both work in low-level jobs for the Roys. Andrew is a server at Shiv’s wedding at a castle in England, and Kira is an employee of Waystar Royco’s cruise lines, where she has witnessed harassment, sexual assault, and death. Both capture an act of unpunished wrongdoing by the Roys, and they’re avenging spirits in the bodies of service workers. Their stories are similar: They appear, threaten the family’s status, and are exorcised. Their characters are

briefly outlined—we know Andrew smokes weed and Kira is a mother—but in the Roy worldview and in the story the show tells, they're not quite real people.

At the end of the first season, Kendall asks Andrew, who has been fired from the gig for attracting Logan's ire by overfilling his wine glass, if he knows where to find cocaine. Andrew does, but it requires a drive, and he's high on ketamine, so Kendall—who has been drinking and using cocaine all day—takes the wheel and sets off. He's speeding and distracted when a deer appears, wraithlike, in the headlights. Andrew instinctively grabs the wheel and sends the car off a bridge, and it thunders into a lake and sinks. Only Kendall emerges. After a halfhearted attempt at rescuing Andrew, he sneaks back to the party and establishes an alibi by dancing with his children to Whitney Houston. Logan learns of Kendall's involvement in the accident and has his bodyguards cover up the crime, forcing Kendall back into the fold through a combination of blackmail and gratitude.

Kira is dispatched by Shiv in the second season. When Waystar Royco executives are called to testify before the Senate about the company's cruise line malfeasance, Shiv learns from a former employer, a Bernie Sanders knockoff named Gil Eavis, that a second whistle-blower will take the stand that week. She meets that whistle-blower, Kira, in a playground and persuades her to withdraw from the proceedings by promising to clean up the company. "I will destroy the men who ran that dirty operation," Shiv says. "We will be the best, cleanest operation in the world because of you, if you help me do this." Kira asks if she can trust Shiv's promise. "No, no. Actually, no," Shiv replies. "Frankly, I want what's best for me. But the other people...they want what's best for them." Kira drops out.

To outsiders, Shiv seems the family's most liberal, ethical, independent-minded member. She established a career in politics and sprinkles quotes from Amelia Earheart and Thomas Aquinas across her first corporate memo. Still, it's hard to imagine that Shiv sees Kira as anything more than a crisis to be managed. Earlier, at a business conference at a rustic luxury lodge, Shiv catches Tom flirting with Nia, a businesswoman whom Shiv knows by reputation and who recently launched an IPO. Shiv has just slept with an airheaded actor in a play Connor is financing in New York. But

when Tom ventures that he's allowed to pursue Nia per the same ill-defined rules that allowed Shiv to pursue the actor (her kink seems to be not communicating about sexual boundaries), she balks. "Come on. Nia's a real person, with a face," she says.

For Kendall, the idea of Andrew's humanity seems painful to consider. On a later visit to England, after a tabloid story connects Logan's outburst at the wedding with Andrew's death, Logan visits the Dodds' family home for a PR-staged apology and strongarms Kendall into joining him. Both men enter the low brick house, and Logan joins Andrew's parents. But the camera remains with Kendall while he waits in a quiet kitchen, its walls decorated with a pattern of coffee cups. The conversation happening in the other room is muffled, inaudible. We don't learn anything about Andrew beyond what can be gleaned from the house and a collage of childhood photos on the wall. Instead, Kendall's face is held in tight focus as he struggles to hide his guilt.

There's more to learn about Andrew. A small detail, easy to miss: The night before he died, he was with Greg Hirsch, a gangly, earnest cousin struggling to find his footing in the Roy family. From far away, we see Greg jump out of a blue hatchback when he spots Tom out for a morning jog, intending to confront Tom about Shiv's affair with a coworker. The blue car belongs to Andrew. It is the car that will go into the river that night. "Great night, man. Thanks for the ride," Greg says as he leaves. "See ya, man." The subtext isn't necessarily romantic; Greg also loves drugs, so maybe they were up partying or watching TV stoned. Still, in a few lines, we see a sketch of another story, one *Succession* doesn't tell.

On the show's own terms, the "blood sacrifice" that matters isn't Andrew or Kira but Logan, who is sacrificed to save the company. After one too many betrayals, Kendall—possibly acting with Shiv's help or approval—makes public their father's knowledge of misdeeds in the cruise division, supported by documents that Greg squirreled away while following orders to destroy the company's internal logs. Perhaps this is a version of the plan Shiv pitched to Kira. Even then, by Shiv's admission, she wants what's best for herself, and the same could be said of all the Roy heirs, which makes for a weak alliance between them and is a poor substitute for justice. Kira's name is not mentioned in the season's finale. This is, after all, still a story that knows who the real people are. ■

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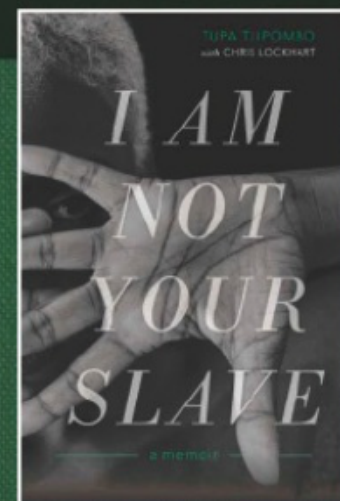
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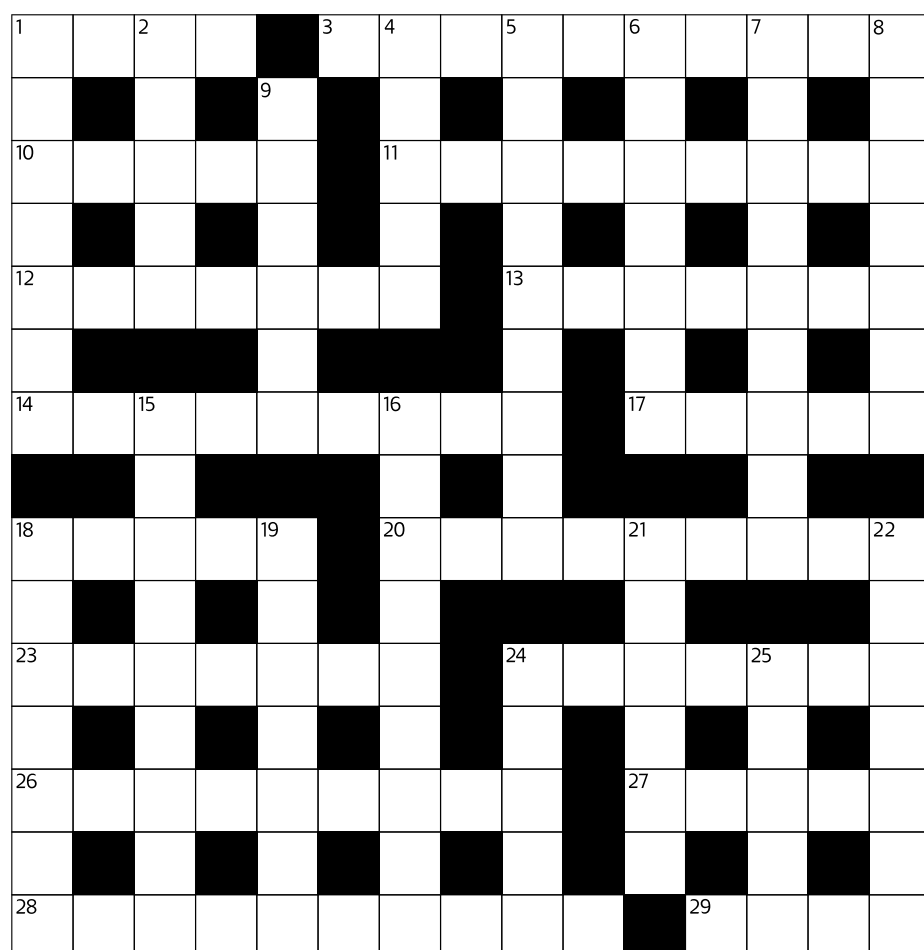


"I am not a poor suffering girl from Africa. I am a Himba woman from Namibia. I am an elephant walker. I am a shield maker."



Puzzle No. 3516

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

- 1 Transportation cost is reasonable, we hear (4)
- 3 Irreverent person mixed maple and herbs (10)
- 10 Brown wood with the top cut off (5)
- 11 Utter the following last words: "Three stars!" (said with an accent, maybe) (9)
- 12 Move the camera about king beginning to eat something for breakfast (7)
- 13 Two converts, breaking lease, make a possibly illegal start (3-4)
- 14 Superhero's turn to have bad dream (6-3)
- 17 Grant involves no sword swallower, for example (5)
- 18 Crumpled sheet for the ones nearby (5)
- 20 "There's plenty between cold and its opposite"—that's a low blow (5,4)
- 23 Made arrangements for surgery and quietly returned Johnny to the emergency room (7)
- 24 Any rude punk is caught napping (7)
- 26 Smell of newspaper in European nation (9)

- 27 Unusual object made of copper, west of Brazilian city (5)
- 28 Drunken Australian revelry (10)
- 29 Poet is dull in retrospect (4)

DOWN

- 1 Outspoken enemy (Dad) makes a slip (4,3)
- 2 "Hurricane" Carter to add insult to injury (5)
- 4 Boy with extremely little utensil (5)
- 5 Performed an aria on ecstasy, including every major transformation (3,6)
- 6 At this point, a jerk is someone with unorthodox views (7)
- 7 Head of family to protest about endless court case (9)
- 8 Loud, like John McEnroe perhaps? (7)
- 9 Musical sound of Mediterranean country (6)
- 15 Unrefined and inept alien gent (9)
- 16 European region's weapon with respect to interrupting aid hike (9)
- 18 They let you know when reflux of saliva contains ice (3-4)
- 19 Agent implicated in ancient superpower's rise! (7)
- 21 Crime is irrational—and sexy (6)
- 22 Your Christian upbringing is one source of hormones (7)
- 24 Computerization provides protection for wombs (5)
- 25 Blood carrier upended near highway, for the most part (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3515

ACROSS 1 S(WASH BUCKLE)R

9 [p]LUME + N 10 PAR(AG)RAP + H (*rap* rev.) 11 M + [h]ARRIED 12 anag.

13 DIS (rev.) + D(A)INED 15 PAT + T + I 16 2 defs. 18 W(EL(C)OM)ING (*mole* rev.)

20 AR(RE + S)TS 22 PR + EVEN + T

24 C(ONFID)ANT (*din* of anag.)

25 UNH + I + P 26 pun

DOWN 1 SALE + M 2 anag.

3 HAND I CAPS 4 [s]UPPED

5 "curt girdle" 6 anag. (2x) 7 S(AD + IS)T

8 TH(INK)ING 13 DI(SPA)TCH

14 NEWSSTAN (anag.) + D

15 PROC(ED)URE 17 CA(R)IN + G

19 hidden 21 "sees" 22 anag. 23 pun



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